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The

Literary

Review

QUARTERLY / ONE DOLLAR / AUTUMN 1957

Editorial Notes

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The Literary Review is an internationally circulated medium of publication for contemporary writing in the field of *belles lettres*. It seeks to encourage literary excellence and its appreciation by a wider audience and to further cultural exchange among the peoples of the world. It is hospitable to young writers of promise and to those whose reputation is established. Poetry, fiction (short stories or sections from novels), sketches, plays, imaginative essays concerning literature—all are welcome from those who have something of value to say and are capable of saying that something well.

The Literary Review stresses creative rather than critical writing. This emphasis does not mean that the Editors are unfriendly to analysis or explication—indeed, some articles of this nature are planned—but they feel that this field has probably been over-ploughed or, at least, sufficiently cultivated and that the major current need is for more and better acreage devoted to more purely imaginative writing.

A projected series of appreciations of significant contemporary writers is begun in this first number with a salute to William Carlos Williams—this for several reasons: his distinction as a writer and as a seminal influence in contemporary writing; his life-long encouragement of promising young writers, as many of his letters in this number reveal; and his neighborly support in the launching of this *Review*. In this last connection, it should be noted that Dr. Williams has lived and practiced since 1912 on busy

Ridge Road in Rutherford, New Jersey—the home of the first of Fairleigh Dickinson University's several campuses. There, in addition to a crowded life as physician, he has written most of his thirty-eight published volumes of poetry, fiction, plays, sketches, criticism and autobiography.

While *The Literary Review* devotes itself primarily to writers in English, considerable attention is given to contemporary writing in foreign languages, and plans are under way for special sections on the literatures of a number of non-English speaking countries. This international slant raises the perennial problem of translation. While the Editors share the commonly accepted thesis that translation can almost never transmit the full meaning and flavor of the original, they also believe that translations—the Bible, North's Plutarch, Florio's Montaigne, Fitzgerald's "Rubaiyat," Waley's renderings from the Chinese and Japanese—are often beautiful in themselves, sometimes more beautiful than the originals. Equally important, they provide for the many restricted to English the sole means of communication with those who express themselves in another tongue. The Langston Hughes translations of Gabriela Mistral and the Bianco and Trask translations of Francesco Bianco in this number eloquently illustrate these points.

Most of the contents of this first number was contributed upon request. This gen-

(continue inside back cover)

OCT 11 1957

Contributors

ETHAN AYER's "The Unicorn" is his first published short story, but he has to his credit a novel, verse, a play and, in collaboration with Alec Wilder, a musical based on *The Importance of Being Ernest*, scheduled for Broadway production next Spring.

GURO BJORNSON was born and reared in the Wisconsin Scandinavian community which provides the background of most of the stories she has published.

WITTER BYNNER's published works—poetry, plays, translations, essays, criticism—run into many valued volumes.

MELVILLE CANE, lawyer and poet, is the author of two verse volumes—*A Wider Arc* (1947) and *And Pastures New* (1956)—and the prose volume, *Making a Poem* (1953).

JOHN CIARDI, ranked by Robert Frost "among the best of the young poets today," returned last month from a year's fellowship to the American Academy in Rome, where he completed his translation of Dante's "The Purgatorio." In 1951 he translated "The Inferno." Author of several volumes of poetry, Mr. Ciardi is a member of the faculty of Rutgers University and Poetry Editor of the *Saturday Review*.

E. E. CUMMINGS, author and painter, will be the subject of two articles in forthcoming numbers of *The Literary Review*, one by Charles Norman and the other by Norman Friedman.

GUY DANIELS has published poetry, fiction and translations widely.

DAVID CORNEL DEJONG is the author of three books of verse and three novels.

RICHARD EBERHART's poem, "Apple Buds," was written when the author was seventeen. It was recently discovered and is now in the Richard Eberhart Collection at Dartmouth College, where Mr. Eberhart is poet-in-residence. His latest book, *Great Praises*, appeared last Summer.

The Literary Review

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JOHN FANDEL lives at The Priory, Portsmouth, Rhode Island.

DR. OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY, author of more than a score of distinguished books in virtually every literary form, will be featured in a forthcoming number of this *Review*.

DONALD HALL, assistant professor of English at the University of Michigan, is the author of *Exiles and Marriages* (Viking, 1955).

ROBERT HILLYER, professor of English at the University of Delaware, has had a long and distinguished career as teacher, writer, winning several awards, including the Pulitzer Prize. His new book, *The Relic and Other Poems*, will appear October 1 (Knopf).

LANGSTON HUGHES as a child lived in Mexico and during his adult life has spent much time in Spanish speaking countries. He has translated poems, stories and novels of Latin-American writers and has published eight books of his own poetry. Mr. Hughes's translations of *Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral* will be published in November by Indiana University Press.

ROY MARZ, a member of the English faculty of Butler University, has published poetry in many magazines. He is now in Italy doing a fictional biography of Gorgione.

GABRIELA MISTRAL was born in the village of Vicuña in Northern Chile on April 7, 1889, the daughter of a schoolmaster and village versemaker. She, too, became a teacher and eventually went from the rural schools to the Department of Education at the capital, and became famous as an educator throughout Latin America. But she became more famous as a poet. Among the poems that brought her to fame as a very young woman were those written after the suicide of her sweetheart. They include "Prayer," published in this number. In 1945 Gabriela Mistral was awarded the Nobel Prize

for literature. After a long life of both cultural and diplomatic service in various parts of the world on behalf of the Chilean government, Miss Mistral settled down at Roslyn Harbor, Long Island, in the United States, and died there early in 1957.

VAL MULKERN, born and educated in Dublin, wrote the novel *A Time Outworn* (1951), praised by Frank O'Connor as "the most interesting and significant to have come out of Ireland in 25 years." She has also published short stories, poetry and criticism on both sides of the Atlantic and in Australia. She is married to the Irish writer Maurice Kennedy.

LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL is the author of five volumes of poetry.

CHARLES NORMAN is the author of *The Muses Darling* (Marlowe), *So Worthy a Friend* (Shakespeare), and *The Genteel Murderer* (Thomas Grif-fiths Wainwright). He has in preparation a book about E. E. Cummings which Macmillan will publish in 1958.

NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON, editor and educator, is chairman of the department of American Studies at Yale.

ARTHUR UPHAM POPE, founder of the Asia Institute and its Chancellor for many years, directed twelve research expeditions to Iran and organized and edited the seven-volume *Survey of Persian Art* (Oxford). The Asia Institute is now affiliated with Fairleigh Dickinson University.

CHARLES SHAW, abstract artist and poet, is represented in many permanent art collections, has published four volumes of verse, and has contributed to many magazines.

JOHN C. THIRLWALL, professor of English at the City College of New York, is studying the relation between William Carlos Williams' life and writings.

EDGAR I. WILLIAMS, brother of Dr. Williams, is a noted architect.

THE LITERARY REVIEW

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY WRITING

VOLUME I

AUTUMN, 1957

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Where

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY

Where are all the roses gone
That made the air so very sweet;
And, lest the tale be incomplete,
Where are the briars they grew upon?
The girls without comparison,
Where are they now that were so feat:
The young and old, strong and effete,
And all the Springs that brought them on?
The mind of man asks, Where and Whence,
Caught within Time's sharp calendars;
But it may range and range it will:
There is no Time between the stars;
But we, by Time's omnipotence,
Are trapped and stayed till all is still.

From My Notes About My Mother

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

HER FATHER DEAD when she was eight, her mother when she was fifteen or so, without other relatives than her one brother, no one to turn to—she must have had a struggle with herself those years to keep heads up.

This was her training for the future with which to do what battle might be necessary. The whole world of modern ideas was far and away beyond her. Never shall I forget my astonishment to hear her say that the moths, always present in our attic, must have been spontaneously generated out of the natural dust there. That's where her mind was, in the fourteenth or fifteenth century as far as the mechanics of her life were concerned.

Her greatest traits were her moral integrity, her desire to know and to survive, her curiosity—and the necessity which drove her. Her mind seems to have been free as the air and as unfooled—as far as her limitations permitted and that went pretty far. She wanted to recapture the past—as who has not?—the past of a happy childhood of sounds and colors, of fruit and happy faces, gentleness, a guitar strumming and young women laughing together with gleeful faces, inventing as they progressed and the world growing up around them to a mysterious future of success and sensual, if mild, delights. She never lost that desire. To live. Not to die.

How best to tell of her childhood? It begins with her life in Mayaguez: the ocean, the sky, the mountains, the flowers, the birds, the house, the servants. Herself! intensely, egotistically, as in the case of all children, taking possession of that world where to the end of her life she continued to see herself at a great distance.

Sometimes at Easter or Christmas a flowering plant would come to us reminding her of her childhood:

"That takes me back. A rose red verbena when I was eight years old. I had a little plant in a box just like that. How I loved that plant

and how I took care of it! It was one of the first things I had that was entirely my own."

"You were born on Christmas Day, weren't you?" I asked her.

"Yes. Not Christmas. On the twenty-third or the twenty-fourth. I don't know."

"In 1850?"

She ignored the question and continued: "Now I remember. My mother told me I was born between Saturday and Sunday. Or Sunday and Monday, I don't know which. Half-way between, in the middle of the night."

I don't know what she meant, precisely, by that, but it may have been she meant to imply something about the course of her life, that it had remained indeterminate, night-bound.

My brother Ed who is an architect brought some books to the house to show to her—Le Corbusier and his newfangled house on stilts in one of them.

"It makes me think of the house where I was born," she said. "It was not in the city. I suppose like a little farm. Under it there was nothing. It stood on stilts and had stone steps in front that went up very easy. No, there was nothing under it, just fresh air. I remember when I was a little girl I used to go there in my bare feet to get *anuelos*, because they would make me itch and I used to love to scratch them."

As far as I can tell she can't have lived there long after her birth. It was no doubt on some later date, after they were living in Mayaguez, that she remembered going back to the old farm to wander about, out of the sun, with the chickens and black children to enjoy being flea-bitten.

For her substantial memories certainly centered about the Mayaguez house where the family knew whatever prosperity—and it seemed to be fairly substantial—it ever knew. This is how she described it to me:

"The street was here, one house next to the other. There was a big parlor, a balcony in front with french windows that opened to it. It was close to the street, almost no front yard. There was an upright piano and the little organ that my brother played. When Patti began to sing she sang in that room; my father brought her, with Gottschalk; she was a very young girl. To this side, if you sit at the piano, was my

mother's room and my crib was there—I suppose you call it a crib. It had high sides."

The description of the house went on, from room to room, from the scrubbed bare boards of the floor to the steep staircase, to the barrel of molasses in the pantry and back to the visit of Gottschalk and Patti, one of the high spots of her life:

"The piano, I remember, had two silver candlelabras on each side, which were taken out for Gottschalk to play—to give him more room. Patti was flying about and called my father 'Uncle'."

Trying to remember the house where she had lived as a child was, in her own words, "giving myself a mental exercise—anything to pass the time." She was a wonder at that.

A tune, maddening her to desperation, had been running in her head for weeks. She had done everything she knew to get rid of it but unsuccessfully. She had joked about it, saying she had once seen Coquelin enacting the part of a man so bedevilled:

"A little song I used to sing when I was a young girl—it has been running in my head all day. I am saying something but I hear it there all the time. It makes me crazy! It makes me think of Coquelin, the only time I saw him. He had a song in his head and he couldn't get rid of it. But you would have to see him to understand. Nobody could be so funny. Finally he jumped into the water to drown himself, to forget his obsession. When he came up vomiting the water out of his mouth—the song was still there."

Perhaps my way of telling this isn't exactly what you might prefer or expect, but in this family you are expected to understand what is said and interpret, as essential to the telling, the way in which it is told—for some reason which you will know is of the matter itself. That is to picture it. "Figure to yourself," as my mother would often say—obviously translated directly from the French.

The overtones of her way of speaking would, thus, often come from three languages—and quite unconsciously—so that one had to listen and interpret to perceive exactly what her meaning was. It was never a perfunctory language or a formal one but highly descriptive.



A POEM IS BORN
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS
BY HIS BROTHER EDGAR WILLIAMS

San.

Poor soul, when sometimes I'd be tired and short with her, exasperated at her continual complaining about her "pains" which were eternally worse than any she had ever had in the past, she'd say, "If I don't speak to you, then I don't speak at all." She would get her way and I'd say no more. So that, rather than see her sit wooden-faced and silent at table, I'd deliberately give her a small glass of vermouth or anything we had, if she'd take it. It was like fishing, was fishing in fact, for more often than not she'd come up with a story.

"I should say I have been frightened. I remember when my mother would go out. They would leave me with a colored woman. It was a two-story house near the town with a sugar plantation next to it, a big field. One night she was telling me how the Devil would come across the field and take little children up! I was listening with my very eyes. Then she told me to go upstairs to bed. I started up the stairs and the wind came across the sugar cane. Whoo! I don't know how I got up the rest of the way. I fell to the top. I thought the Devil had me sure."

Listening to a blue jay in the garden, Bee bee! Bee bee! in a strident voice: "There is a bird there, in Puerto Rico," she said. "I don't know what they call it, that says, *Julia achivivo!* very fast. *Julia achivivo!* *Julia achivivo!* The Christi sugar estate was next to our house and when I was a little girl I used to go there without any shoes and sit under a guava tree. I would gather my skirt full of fruit and eat them. I would eat the green ones first and save the best. Then when I came to them I couldn't eat any more. They say when you plant an apple seed in the tropics it comes up a guava. I don't know if it is true."

And like the rooms in the house, the varieties of fruit along the roadside would be described: "The *mango* they plant in yards like our apple-trees. Then there is the *caimito*. It is round like an apple and bright green but inside it is pure white, like milk. Toledo always called me *cara de caimito* because when I was young my face was round like that. The *nispero* is about the same size only it is brown and soft inside—fluffy. Then there is the *corazón*, red and shaped like a heart and the *quenepas*, small like a plum and green, it comes in bunches and you bite it and open it, tac! and suck the inside. There is a bean too, the *guama*, that, when you open it, has little things like

cotton and inside of each is the seed. It is very sweet. You take each one out and suck it. There is, too, a grape that grows by the sea, a seaside grape. There is a kind of orange which I have never seen here. It is half orange, half grapefruit, a sort of bitter sweet. It has a rough skin, like big pores. They call it *toronja*. And there is another orange, like an orange only much smaller and it is always green. Green, green, green! It never gets yellow. The taste is just sugar and water, no taste at all but very sweet. Or perhaps just the least taste of orange. They call it *lima*. They have a little plant they call *nuribibi*—dead alive. If you touch it, it looks as if it were dead, it collapses. Then after a little while it is alive again. The sensitive plant, yes."

Her observation seems to have been minute and dispassionate and, so far as her condition and surroundings were concerned, comprehensive, if not philosophical or profound as the meanderings of a childish intelligence sometimes will be. She saw and tasted everything with relish at least, and respected the truth.

As Mayaguez, the tropic island, dominated her childhood, with its human drift, its loyalties and aspirations, so France, especially Paris, dominated her young womanhood.

"That rose!" she said to me one day when I brought a rose in to her from the garden. "It seems to me that is the smell of the roses in that circle there in France—the first summer that I went, the real rose smell."

There had been a broken engagement and her brother offered to send her away. "Where do you want to go?" he asked. "To the United States or to France?"

She chose France, a correct choice. There is no place in which to get over a love affair like Paris. She got over it, quick—or never. It is usually the intelligence which rallies first. Something is killed but the person we know, ourselves, is witnessed proceeding quite unaffected to the various points of vantage invented by the day—table and bed and in among the furniture and plants. Finally we are impressed and follow ourselves about, at first wanly, indifferent, but finally with a different kind of interest. The world comes up new. We begin to see it for the first time. It gets itself impressed on us. She found release in painting, in study, in the great world of Paris.

This should really be known as a fashion essay, the varying clothes of the ideal. The ideal was her constant companion. Not religion, certainly not that. But something spotless and heavenly—surrounded by its clothes of her world. As a child, fruit and flowers, as a Parisian, Paris. Her reactions to it all were catholic, that is, untouched by prejudice. She saw what she saw, she heard what she heard; that must not be falsified, like it or not like it, that was the truth. So, her memories of the doings about Paris at the time, the people going about in the petty salons, in the school and at home, reveal the period more than they reveal her.

What did she mean by "the truth"? That's what her story is. For what does any man care about the truth, in her sense, especially what does a writer care, an artist, compared with his convictions? Nothing. Perhaps that's why she never got very far with painting. She wanted to be a portraitist. The truth for her was curiously at war with her sensibilities. One had to report the world according to one's perceptions of it, willy nilly. But this meant serious denials. There was another truth, the truth of self, of angry demands, of satisfaction, of love. She had rejected love for truth's sake. But she had denied herself in that crisis. What truth could there be in that?

She saw faces in the fringes of rugs and curtains as she sat with unfocused eyes in contemplation which, when you went to look directly at them, disappeared. Everywhere, faces, beautiful and grotesque made by a stray thread in a woven fabric, in a pattern of wall paper—faces, staring, in contemplation—children, madonnas. Lions also and dogs.

The mind would be lost in the distances of thought when suddenly a face would begin to appear to call her back. She had no theories of the world or of the arts. The truth was, to her, the truth—and she remained unsatisfied, seeking to follow and to learn.

She worked hard at the Institute and won honorable mention. She played the piano. She sang. M—— was her teacher. "He always gave me the emotional roles. *L'adieu de Marie Stuart*."

"*Allez mon enfant! Allez! Allez,*" he would say to encourage her. "Out with it. Come on, come on!"

One day when she was very old she began to sing unannounced, in her shaky old voice *Pieu per voi che por me!* A duet from *Traviata*.

Then he answers her . . . Let me see . . . But she could not remember it—"More for thee than for me"—the truth, the bitter truth.

Isn't memory a kind of automatic intelligence? One day I was eating an orange at table and happened to take up my half empty glass to pour a little water over my fingers into my empty tea cup. "How one thing makes you think of something else," my mother said. "When you did that it made me think of one of my old friends—Mme. Givry. She was a little old woman. One day when she had finished eating she took her glass of water and did just what you did. It made such a funny impression on me."

When she left Paris it was to join her brother and his family in Puerto Plata, Santo Domingo. There her fate awaited her among those low tin roofed and thatched houses in the person of her future husband, a young Englishman who left the Island to go to the United States.

So she came to America and was married. Before the ceremony, she lived for a time with a professor's family in Jersey City. I once had a card of hers, though I cannot find it now, on which was printed: *Instruction in Spanish, French, Piano, Singing and Painting*. I couldn't help smiling. Poor mother. I suppose by sheer weight of potentialities she hoped to make a go of it—in Jersey City, 1881. I wonder if she ever had a pupil.

She went with her husband to live in a little house in the suburbs on the Erie Railroad—Rutherford Park. So the clock of the years began to tick, slowly and relentlessly for her among the torn up streets, the kerosene lamps, the water tank in the attic, the kitchen pump, the hot air furnace and wooden sidewalks; the mosquitoes, the hot summers and bitter cold winter nights. Pop began his steady daily march to the Railroad Station a mile from the house, and back at night—stopping each night on his return from the city to see if he could hear the baby scream across the woods and the fields.

Who shall define the love between a man and woman or limit it in the imagination? It may be slender or robust, it may be intermittent and yet of purest quality. Between a man and a woman of different races it will have another character than that between a man and woman of the same race. The age of the two will have a

strong determining character upon it. So long as it lasts and continues to be rewarding to them, so long as it bears some sort of fruit or even stands as a windbreak for them it may be authentic. She enjoyed the love of her husband, I am sure. She gave him her love, I am sure of that also. But what each held to himself and to herself within the memory differed greatly. The house in which they lived together was built out of disappointed hopes but it was a good house. It didn't fall down. It didn't even leak. It didn't even seem to shake in the wind, as far as the children could see. There are as many kinds of love as there are trees—or ferns—or things that grow. We judge too hastily when we think only of the magnificent (if they are magnificent) branches of some romantic love. We are jealous. Everybody wants to be rich. Most would rather have an imitation of it made out of green paper than enjoy the actuality of a common weed. They loved each other—which didn't prevent them from a feeling of loss.

So I say, in a life that continues there is a part that lives as there may be a part that dies. In her, though the part that was dying filled her with dread and resentment, for all that—call it cowardice if you care to—there was a part that refused to die. She never had in her any element of the suicide. That may be the female of it, I don't know. It was strong in her. She lived.

Ten miles deep inside, a little boy—preordained by chance, free to run now that it was April—ran. His legs seemed to bounce by themselves under him, he scarcely knew how they could go so fast—or that they were legs. He desired and, riding his pleasure, he arrived and took.

It was all in a great yard with a painted wooden fence of boards, cut out into a scroll design and painted green and red—that stood above his head—but he could peek through and see the people passing.

Behind him his smaller brother, six or less, came following while the mother leaned upon the balustrade of the balcony that encircled the house and watched them play.

There above them as they played leaned nothing of America but Puerto Rico, a foreign island in a tropical sea of earlier year—and Paris of the later seventies.

The spring, the great black cherry trees in blossom and . . .

William Carlos Williams as Correspondent

NOTES AND SELECTIONS BY JOHN C. THIRLWALL

IN A VERY REAL SENSE a selection of letters written over a fifty-five year span reveals more of a man than an autobiography because the autobiography is written at one time, from one point of view, whereas the letters reflect the changing point of view of youth, maturity and age and the shift of interest caused by circumstances. "For arriving at the inside of things," noted Cardinal Newman, "the publication of letters is the true method." And Dr. Williams wrote in the *Autobiography*, "Nine-tenths of our lives is well forgotten in the living."

For four years I have been collecting the letters of Dr. Williams as groundwork for a study of the connection between his life, his profession as physician, and his writing. Out of over two thousand, 193 have been chosen for inclusion in the *Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams*, just published by McDowell, Obolensky. Beginning with letters written to his mother and to his brother in 1902 and ending with letters written in 1957, the collection exhibits an amazing range of interest and insight. The variety of subjects is as vast as the interests of the physician-writer, but, as might be expected from one who has published thirty-eight volumes of verse, short stories, novels, and criticism, many of the letters deal with his constant preoccupation—language. "The brunt of [*Paterson*]," Williams wrote, "is a search for the redeeming language by which a man's premature death might have been prevented . . . The poet alone in this world holds the key to [his] final rescue."

Williams has been thought to be a fairly consistent poet—a writer of free verse and of the simple, natural items of life. Certainly the majority of his verse falls into these categories, but it has not always been so, nor is it today, when he is writing full time. Actually his style and subject have developed from the most imitative and banal to the most original and complex, as I have tried to show in "The Lost Poems

of William Carlos Williams" (*New Directions* No. 16, 1957), a group of some forty poems that reveal the evolution of Williams' style and subject.

For this first number of *The Literary Review*, sponsored by Fairleigh Dickinson University in Williams' native county, I have selected letters which illustrate his critical principles as applied to other poets or which show how his philosophy of life coincided with his poetic principles. In editing the letters material extraneous to this topic and a few words or phrases have been eliminated with Dr. Williams' permission. All deletions are noted in the text. The address of every letter is 9 Ridge Road, Rutherford, New Jersey, Dr. Williams' home and office since 1912.

[To James Laughlin, Editor of *New Directions*, who published much of Dr. Williams' writings from *White Mule* to *Paterson*.]

Sept. 18, 1942

Dear Jim: I was 59 yesterday, so I'd better not talk like the snarling squirrel outside my back window as I write this. I've just read [your] poems and the first thing I can think of to say of them is that they pretty well show up both [Delmore] Schwartz and [Dwight] Macdonald¹—much too hot for their little fingers, much too hot, much too hot.

Geezus Jim, they'd lock you up for that, don't kid yourself. It doesn't matter how you class them. There's more to them than the poetry of them, if any. There is some poetry there, but it's of a sort that wouldn't be healthy for you to follow up. You'd land in the jug. Maybe your wife's your friend, maybe Schwartz and Macdonald are friends—but they ain't committing themselves. Your wife of course doesn't know much about you and what you did and said "before the war." She just sees what is going on now and senses the dynamite. You'd end up as another John Brown—or else.

Of course you're right. And of course the bastards of the world are going to win and bitch the world. I don't think decent minds have a prayer. But did you read that Joad in England had given up his

1. Dr. Williams had had a minor political falling-out with the editors of *Partisan Review* in 1939.

theory of economic responsibility and has rejoined the Church? That means a hell of a lot. Sin and the responsibility for it will be the next jump, and the economic bastardies will be condoned as always in God's name. It's coming as plain as the nose on your face.

Yet, your protests do somehow seem dated. That would be my objection to them. The time for what you are writing of was before the war. It wasn't you who failed to do your part, but that you didn't prevent the war thereby is an acknowledgement of your own and my own failure. We tried and we failed, therefore ours is a lost cause—as lost as that of the South in the Civil War.

Now the other side has the world in its grasp and if we are going to do anything about what we believed in and still believe in, it would mean we've simply got to get out on the corner and get shot for it or get put in jail for it at the very least. For now it is or would be throwing a monkey wrench into the works of the operating machine. I have a book that a friend sent me that is in the same class as these poems. It is written by a German, F. W. Foerster, and is called *Europe and the German Question*. I'm reading it, read it. It is an authentic German viewpoint, diametrically opposed to everything Germany is today and stems from Humboldt and stems from those Germans who many years ago opposed Bismarck and foresaw everything that was to come of his philosophy.

But Germany has gone the other way and Foerster remains only a very thin pennant flying almost invisibly somewhere over the wreck of lost hopes—perhaps for the future, we hope so, but of practically no significance—unless the present Germany is beaten. What you are clinging to is something like Foerster's nostalgic clinging to the greatness of that old Germanic ideal now lost.

But my real critical objection is the poems themselves. I find them too bald, too despairing—under the circumstances, too much a religious attitude, too much a statement of faith and a plan for what should be a poetic attitude. They are really addressed not to the emotions, not to minds of those who can read poems or need to read poems, but to a potential mob. They are really propaganda and propaganda for a lost cause suggesting sentimentality—unless, as I have said, backed up by action of the most heroic sort. Give Pound at least credit for his not-too-eloquent standing up for Italy and the Fascisti. He is at least suffer-

ing in his body for his stupidity—as we think.

Now, if you are still convinced that the stand you take in these poems is the correct one, lost as it may be, and yet do not feel impelled to translate them into action—and . . . hasn't the guts to back you in it and stand beside you, and he hasn't the guts, then the only other thing possible would be for you to translate their *FEELING* and intellectual conviction into a *comparable* poetic *form* or style. Perhaps you feel that you have already done this, that the bareness of your statement (comparable to something of Masfield's I have seen recently) is the correct style for the sort of thing you want to do with the materials. I don't agree. I still think that most of the poems are improperly addressed, to the wrong sort of person—that they would gain by having the thought made the spring-board for what the setup it indicates induces objectively in things. Am I clear? No. Or yes?

If, in other words, you think this way, then it should induce you to see a hog or a wife or a fifty cent piece *that* way—whatever that way may be. That would be poetic creation. Now do you see? No? I couldn't tell you how to do it.

But to get back to the poems. Some are better than others. One or two look as if they might stand as stylistic creations of some validity, I won't say how much but some.

I don't say I back this kind of "poetizing" but, after all, it is about all there is to Dante *except* the making of the poem itself, as a thing to stand by itself. You fall into the piano and do not stand off enough and play.

Yet *I* am moved by what you do. Thus I sell my own statements, above, from under my own feet though I am not *enough* moved poetically but *more* moved by the thought and your position as backing the thought.

Look, these poems should be studied, worked with until something appears. Either you've got to back them with your own neck, your own hide (which is or isn't what you mean), or they are works of art.

That fellow Beecher, descendant of the original Beecher, who goes around with the workers in the cotton mills of the South writes like this. It has its place.

If, for instance, these pieces, faultlessly worded, full of passionate conviction were made into Dresden China rhymed couplets, *that* would be a poem. Something then would stand between you as Jim Laughlin and the poet Laughlin. I'm a hell of a person to be saying this, but the question of *making* the poem is that important. The sonnet form would of course be nauseating—nauseous in such a context, but *something* else than the bare statements is necessary—I think.

Suppose for instance, speaking of your poem "How To Win," the formula you work out there *does* win the war. What then? It probably will. What the hell have you proved? What, moreover, have you shown that the acts of the boys who got slaughtered for going on their crazy missions didn't show better? At least they went and got killed and their wives will get other husbands—or do something else and have erotic dreams of sleeping with a hero.

Disarranging the English of the sentences might show something, torturing the words, slooping them around into miserable postures, maiming them. Either that or *polishing* them, as I have said, would be the only way. Something would have to be done with them.

God damn it, you are not writing cynically. That alone would induce me to tell you to write it out, write fifty more punching poems, thinking it through in the manner of Veblen, developing it to some terrifying logical conclusion of murder or saintliness and making a book of it and letting it stand as is. But it would have to be devastating to the spirit, final and—that would justify your style, your careless prose style. That alone would justify it, the powerful impact of your facts carried through. That too would be a poem.

Yours,
Bill

[To Horace Gregory].

May 3, 1944

Dear Horace: I may as well tell you from the first that I'll be writing you several letters during the next few months to a year concerning your *Shield of Achilles*. To me it's a profoundly important book, my only regret concerning it being its small size. I could go on reading indefinitely. And may I add that I have not reread in it your statements concerning *In The Am. Grain*, my admiration and satisfaction have

nothing to do with that—nor did I miss the implication when your reviewer in the *Times Book Review* spoke of some of the essays which he avoided mentioning as hack work. I got it. I'm used to that sort of attack.

Which, by the way, does bring up one other point; though what you say in this book is American in its critical quality (or so I choose to call it), you nowhere in the book intimate such a thing. You nowhere, for instance, take a stand comparable to Eliot's English assertions. I'll bring that up again later, it is most important to me.

You see, you are the materialization in this book of something I have always sought. I have always wanted someone with a formal literary training, something I myself have never had, on whom I could count (in my mind) for a basic understanding of that which I have been driving at. I have never had it. I have had friends, plenty of them, but their culture—as I envision it—has always been unsatisfactory to me. I have never felt that they complemented me as I have wanted to be complemented.

Take Eliot whom I so detest. I need such an agent working in my environment toward the form of enlightenment which is possible for me here—and it is not only possible but of brilliant possibilities precisely because it is here and American. I've had no co-worker. On the contrary, I know in my very bones, and not there only, that everything Eliot says is antagonistic to my viewpoint. He is strangely blind and in a peculiarly British sense to universal values as they appear in work whose *feeling* he does not accept. And all things American come into this blind area for him.

You see, I need a man of Eliot's training and capabilities here, but nowhere in his writing can I find anything but antagonism and blindness. Take for instance this new article in the recent *Partisan Review*. Is that profound? Is there anything in it that has not been stated and restated (perhaps not clearly enough) in all American literature, in the very fact of an American literature? In fact the culture (hard to find perhaps) which is America and at the same time is universal. Rightly his abstract thesis of which I am speaking *should* be a specific study of American tendencies, for he is in his basic culture an American, drawing out the good that is in us, revealing our peculiar culture (that has produced your book), giving specific instances, etc.

But instead of that, as I see it, all his writing is an avoiding, an avoiding (to me) of that peculiar culture which is my very blood. All Eliot does is to evade the particular in the general and the more or less abstract. He will not come out for the thing but the shadow of the thing—the intellectual shadow. But that, when we are in possession of the thing itself, maimed, marred or defective, is doubly insulting, since while he is praising he is on the other side of his face maliciously condemning the very thing he praises.

And when that is ME, then he is worthy of nothing but—contesting to my last breath.

Don't believe me intemperate in a foolish manner. I need help. I need you. There is a tremendous amount of work to be done here—and here better than elsewhere on earth, for it is the universal that we are after, nothing else than that and it is to that, in the particular, that Eliot in fact is defeating—as if he didn't dare acknowledge its presence, since that would show up his own defeat and emptiness. We are cultured as he himself says only when the environment we inhabit is cultured, etc., etc.

Why I come to you is that I believe and feel that your abilities, your learning, your very style are not unfriendly to me, that at the very least they do not condemn me. The whole attitude of your book is generous toward those undertakings which I am devoted to and which must carry me for the remainder of my life to whatever affirmation I can succeed in—

(3 hours later—after having seen an assortment of humanity, intimately, from discharged soldiers to a woman going to see her husband in a camp in Arkansas and not wishing to become at once pregnant again.)

You may see by what I have written above that I have attached myself to you (through this book) in a rather positive, even a drastically final manner. I am not unaware that anyone reading this might think that it is my emptiness which might be the cause of my attachment rather than your strength—but I know different. This isn't a sudden conversion or even perception, it has been a lifelong approach. I am astonished at my own certainty.

There are a multiplicity of reasons for these statements, statements which I assure you are not in the least intemperate but quite the

opposite. I've found—a manner of thinking, a certainty of phrase, a balance of view which, for instance, I have missed in, let us say Ezra Pound, Kenneth Burke, T. S. Eliot (many others I merely look at and consider second rate—the popular “literary” newspapermen and bores). What I am after is scholarship—of a peculiar taste and complexion, something I can respect and USE.

Other letters, later, will carry on what I have so imperfectly initiated here.

Feel no embarrassment concerning me. My devotions are not of the intrusive sort.

Sincerely,
Bill

[To Srinivas Rayaprol, a young Indian, who was unhappily studying engineering in the United States. He returned to India, where he edits *East and West*, a bi-lingual poetry journal.]

May 24, 1950

Dear Seena: You write interesting prose, full of the keenest observation and shrewd wit. Someday you will write an account of your American experience that will be read and read for what it says, not a mere English book of contempts. When I think of what “style” has come to mean I want to puke. A clever, English “literary style,” an Oxford accent in the writing, with proper disregard for everything commented upon (why do they comment at all), an indirect puffing up their own contentments using the American background as a field to enhance the highlights of their own charm, is about as low as anyone can get as a writer.

But it sells! It sells to Americans!! They love it!! This too should delight us. It is for this reason that I have found it impossible to go to hear Dylan Thomas while he was here. Just the dreamy look that comes into the eyes of our . . . writers and so-called competent critics who control the publicity columns of the *avant garde* forums and publications, has been enough for me. They drool at the mouth. And I think I'd like Thomas if I could get him alone, but you can see that they are almost wetting their pants out of excitement over his voice and the wild colours of his imagery.

And I, as a consequence, must be jealous of him. They look at

me out of the corners of their eyes as much as to say, Well, Williams, there's no one in this country who can read like that. So that if you speak slightly of him we can only come to one conclusion: you'd read that way if you could, but since you haven't the voice or the manner or even his wonderful poems to give us—you try to belittle him. The result is that I haven't wanted to go to hear him. They pack the auditoriums. Poor guy.

What they cannot see is that American poems are of an entirely different sort from Thomas's Welsh-English poems. They use a different language and operate under a different compulsion. They are more authoritarian, more Druidian, more romantic—and they are, truly, more colourful. WE CAN'T AND MUST NOT WRITE THAT WAY. At the same time the audience appeal (and always take a careful look at all audiences during their affection by a reader) is much more intense than is any audience we can affect. They listen to me and shy away. They do not want me, they want what they have been used to, the old tradition, the virtuoso in an accepted mode. They want what I cannot and will not give.

Some of your depressions are native to you and cannot be avoided. But some of them are due only to your youth. Accept them and welcome. Take everything that comes, for what you feel is at least an evidence that you are reacting intelligently and intensely—you to a world that is close about you. You are "being" when you feel, no matter how depressed you may be. But count on it. You have at your age no idea how you will feel ten years from now. What now you hate you may by then come to love and what you now love—though not everything—you may in twenty years have so forgotten you can't even remember its name. But the basic love will remain even though now you don't even name it (properly) to yourself. Only long trial will finally make us conscious of our true treasures.

About your feeling for India (I think your poem is well worthwhile), no doubt some psychoanalyst could give you an answer—and it would be the worst thing, in my opinion, that could happen to you. My own feeling is that, like all young men or women of intelligence coming from an environment which in its common aspect is dreadfully backward, you enjoy being away from it. The horrors of some of the phases of India must sicken you. You are young. You are glad to

have escaped (temporarily) from the necessity for doing something about that country, your country, your father's and your ancestors' country, though in your heart you know you can never escape it.

In one sense, your father represents all that is backward in India to your mind. You can't escape him. You want like all the young to live the thrilling intellectual and emotional life you crave. You don't want to be bothered to have to give that up and throw yourself into that ancient maelstrom. For it may very well be the end of you. Truly it may. For it is not at all certain that you will succeed in doing anything, even with the greatest wit and intelligence. You may not even be wanted. They may be better off without you. That's a hard thought.

Suppose you do what you want to and go to Paris. In other words, suppose you become as you wish, an international figure. If you have genius it is possible that may be the very best thing you can do. But if you want no more than the amusement of your appetites—well, you might, with money, still turn out to be at least a decorative person—and do no harm.

You are very young, praise the Lord for it and work. That's all I know. What you will end up by doing no one can say. But if I know you, I think you will, by understanding your father's position, come finally to accept him and understand him and become, curiously enough, HIS father. Thus you'll learn to pity him and develop a final love and affection. Perhaps you had to leave your father and India to detach yourself from them in order to be able to love. You can't love at command. No one can. You went away to learn by detachment what you were. With your excellent mind and spirit you will, I am sure, not be the kind to waste yourself. Ulysses went out and returned intact. He was at first a liar: he deceived those who wanted to draft him for the wars, he did everything necessary to remain—or even to be himself, a one, an individual. You are going through something like that. But naturally today the conditions have to be differently understood. Today we give ourselves more easily than Ulysses did and are not destroyed by it: we cure syphilis in a week by penicillin!

Don't regret anything. For you are young, believe me. It doesn't make one damned bit of difference what you have done (except that you had to leave India and I think you did well to come here before Paris or Buenos Aires or London)—you *can't* make any mistakes. It

is all of a piece. Do anything you want to (so long as you keep your mind free). You can, if you must, throw away ten or twenty years (and provided you keep working hard at something or other and working intensely) and keep ears and eyes open. No one is going to capture you or maim you. Go.

Best,
Bill

[To Richard Eberhart, one of the ever-growing tribe of poet-professors, he is also one of the most distinguished of the tribe.]

10/23/53

Dear Dick: I remember when Ezra Pound first went to London and met Yeats, Yeats asked him what he, Ezra, thought of his, Yeats', poems. Ezra was forced to say that he admired them greatly, as was the truth, but that they were marred by a deforming inversion of the phrase which was deplorable. Yeats at once set about correcting the defect and worked diligently at it for several years. The evidence of it appears in many of his finest pieces.

But the style of the older man had been set long and if, as you say, he reverted to the use of inversions of an abnormal contour of the phrase in his last work (if it is true), you can put it down to a dominance of a measure to which he had become accustomed and which he did not find it easy to escape.

What Pound did not realize, nor Yeats, either, is that a new order had dawned in the make-up of the poem. The measure, the actual measure, of the lines is no longer what Yeats was familiar with. Or Pound either except instinctively. Hopkins, in a constipated way with his "sprung" measures, half realized it but not freely enough. To escape the prosiness of the lines or the threat of prosiness in the line, the foot has to be expanded to make a freer handling of the measure possible. That's what Yeats was up against without realizing it. It had him restless under the restrictions of criticism. It makes you restless under the same restrictions. You, as Yeats was, are dominated by a concept of the line which comes from an old (pre-Whitman) prosody which stems from traditional English (and French, German, Scandinavian, Russian, Chinese and perhaps Greek) verse. Only in the present day are we beginning to realize how it restricts us. It restricts

our lives as well to be measured after the standard and so, unless we become aware of it, our poems rather than freeing, as they should do, throw us back on old modes of behavior.

Whitman with his so-called free verse was wrong: there can be no absolute freedom in verse. You must have a measure but a relatively expanded measure to exclude what has to be excluded and to include what has to be included. It is a technical point but a point of vast importance. The question of the inversion or refusal to invert our poetic phrases is locked up in that. . . .

With all the love in the world,
Bill

[To John C. Thirlwall].

Nov. 30/54

Dear Jack: The fullness of the devastating discovery that my native language was not English and the significance of that fact to the mind was slow to dawn on me. For instance, the very transition of the step in the preceding sentence from "America" to "the mind" has taken me a lifetime. My only excuse for this is that of all men I have been the first to give it a practical bent—and to take the consequences. I speak of *belles lettres* only, but that field of all fields comprising the scope of the written word is of all fields the most far reaching and the most jealously guarded. The violence of my reactions touching what I alone saw to be the unintelligence of any who did not see as I did can be ascribed only to that. I was shocked at his failure to follow me in what I knew to be so important an enlightenment and could not look upon his defection from my party (though there was no party at the time) as anything more than treachery.

It began for me as it must always do on the purely physical plane. I was at the same time besides being the product of a new country, a child of a new era in the world, the era which was to discover among others, the relativity of all knowledge. But the world about me still clung to the old measurements.

I knew instinctively that it was wrong. My ears were keen, I sensed it first through my ears; even when I was a babe in arms my uncle who was a musician noticed it and spoke of it to my mother: Listen! he said and began to beat a drum. At a certain point in the

rhythm he would stop sharply and I, to complete the beat, would come in with my tum tum. I did not have the subtlety of the best Negro drummers but something fundamental had taken place in me of which I knew nothing. I began in my early 20s to realize that I was dissatisfied with my lot, and my relatives, neighbors and friends seemed not to understand me when I spoke to them. I loved them and could not understand what it was that was keeping us apart.

The mind's a queer fish. It wants to live; when the air is denied it, it comes to the surface gasping for air and when it is denied that, it turns on its side on the sand and soon expires. I did not intend to die but thought very often during my youth that my time was short. I was often depressed for I was early convinced that I had in the compass of my head a great discovery that if I could only get it out would not only settle my own internal conflicts but be of transcendent use to the men and women around me. That it concerned something as evanescent as language I did not for a moment guess.

And yet I should have been more aware of it than I was. I did through my skin sense it, but for it to reach the level of consciousness should not have taken a lifetime. Convention or habit is a tyrannous master, all decency (and that's what makes men rebels) enforces it. Sex is one lead out of our dilemma and that is why many men take it. That sex is intimately concerned with the rebellious mind is of vast significance and that few men see it—this leads us to most of the torments of our early youth. It is another of the physical stages of my opening mind through which it had to pass before the flower. . . .

Sincerely yours,

Bill

P.S. I'm tired writing now, as it very much excites me to have the old noggin sound off and I am always interested in what it has to say but it takes it out of me to have to be so slow in taking it down and as always the gates of my senses get crowded with the press of words and ideas: I have to say "Down Fido!" some time before I tire and run off into drivel. Why not now?

[To Miss Ruth A. Jackson, who had heard WCW read at the University of California. She asks: "What is your definition of faith? Of prayer? And have you found them actually 'practical' in your life

and career(s)? . . . I've found in your poems, your short stories, and your talks an undercurrent of this deeper side of living."]

Jan. 15, 1957

Dear Ruth A. Jackson: I have always found prayer an affront to the intelligence. When I witness a football team going on a field and praying that they win the game, I am infuriated. The little tags blessed by some priest worn about the neck by devotees of some faiths to separate them from a Turk or a Japanese or a Protestant is too transparent a device to frighten the individual into conformity for extortion. All this is old stuff.

And yet to be an atheist is to me equally impossible. Since we know nothing, to be positive about such a positive statement that there is no god is laughable. How do we know?

All complex exclusive religions—believe this or that or be damned to you—has no meaning to me. So also with mysticism of any sort as a conduct for our lives. I have never been up against any mystic or Yogi of any sort—either in the poems of Mr. Eliot or Huxley, the use of drugs to induce dreams. I have always seen them to be tendencies of intelligent men when they come to the end of their twistings and turnings to deceive themselves.

The imagination keeps us busy when we have nothing else to fall back upon. A pointed love of our fellow men and women, particularly women, must occupy us while we work to clarify our minds about what we have to do. Maybe to do nothing is better, but it wouldn't hold my attention for long.

Maybe I'm just an engineer of some sort—of the written poem on the page. To be sentimental about the poem or mystical is just an ignorant joke. You have to keep your senses clear to write a good poem and alert to what is going on in the world, structurally—and live as Pasteur has warned us always with a theory of what is new in the world. That should keep us from silly ideas as to "faith" and the value of "prayers."

The world is at the same time a mysterious place. My mother was a medium! Make what you can of this.

Sincerely yours,
William Carlos Williams

Jan. 19/57

Dear Naomi Hunter: BURN those damned sonnets! And LEARN never to invert (not as easy as you think) a phrase. There is enough excellent work and more that is excellent and exciting in your verse than I can say in a word.

You have verve and generosity and daring (often technical skill—at least a beginning) enough in your work to make a brilliant poet—but you don't know enough about the art. Sometimes you fall flat on your face in the mud or worse and you don't know how to prevent it (at times no one does!).

It has been a pleasure to read your poems. The most important as it is the most ambitious is AUTUMN FORCES. You have used a three beat line amazingly well—and so you have made of this tremendously difficult mode something arresting. No inversions here.

The secret of all this is, in the first place, that you have an instinctive sense for your native American idiom and the ignorance (or sense) to use it for your practice. You are very lucky. Unless you understand WHAT you're doing you may easily become lost: my function re. yourself is to place you on your feet and insist on your not making an ass of yourself.

You show an instinctive FEELING for the *variable foot*. That is important. You have a trick of squeezing more syllables into a line than should be there if the line is conventionally scanned. THAT, my dear young lady, is a stroke of genius and courage. It is also a sign that marks a modern poem for the magical NEW!!

But don't crow yet. Every advance in technique is an advance also of responsibility in the art, a sobering responsibility. You are lucky to have hit on an advance by instinct, but you have to know CONSCIOUSLY what you have done so that you can control it. . . .

Good luck (I'm very proud to know such a woman who promises to be one of the most interesting talents I have ever encountered).

For the record: I don't like your light verse: not clever enough. It'll do, but you have more important things to do—not that you can ever be heavy! with your marvelous sense of humor—but it has to be sharpened to be effective. Your quatrains are very well done at times. You use any of the verse forms, iambic as well . . . whatever they are called . . . with equal instinctive skill. You're a very good girl. I wish

I had your native skill. Watch it and EXPLOIT it in your work. Let go! God knows where you may not end up.

In the well known mud? You're too intelligent for that.

Oh, Floss says you'll have to learn to spell if you want to be a writer, like her husband. There's one word "clag" in the piece REVEILLE which still defies me.

Your line division (instinctive again) is superb, making finely turned stanzas—as in TIDES-WORD or MORE OR LESS and a number of other places makes me happy. Don't get self-conscious about that but go your own sweet way. It'll be "right," as much as these things can ever be. . . .

Sincerely yours,
William Carlos Williams

Two Sentimental Little Poems

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

I

The flower
 fallen
a pink petal
 intact on the ground

Deftly
 she raised it
and placed it
 on its stem again

2

At the brink of winter
planting the bulbs
Sh!
she said to the garden,
They are going to sleep!

Williams, New Jersey

NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON

*"The classic is the local fully realized,
words marked by a place." —W.C.W.*

IN RETROSPECT, the long struggle of the American artist to accept his native material as manageably "poetic" seems to have been unduly prolonged. And in all probability the younger generation of American writers no longer feels it as a struggle at all, being, as they now are, aware of what has been achieved and proclaimed. But there has been a struggle, and at least there is now a choice. At one hand there is the example of literary cosmopolitanism (as distinct from colonialism) of the sort practised by Pound and Eliot in merging American data into an international complex. Who but an American, taking all literatures and gobbits of the past as a natural right of inheritance, without entailment, could combine such scraps and fragments into a single texture of verse as they have done? A Frenchman is too single-strained to do it, an Englishman similarly too English! On the other hand there is the more restrictive, semi-philosophical nativism of a man like William Carlos Williams. Williams' objections to Pound's method and Eliot's notwithstanding, his confrères have established their point by their achievement. But so has he by his.

Williams has had to stand his own ground, really, against another enemy. Any number of American writers, not standing theirs, have tried to make grails out of ashcans. It has been one of the literary professions of our countrymen, at least since the American eye stopped looking at nightingales to notice bobolinks, and then heard the bobolinks outchirped by sparrows. There have been those also (again with memories) who became connoisseurs of grails, only in the end to put ashes in them. But one of the basic national economies of Williams is the confidence with which he has been able to look at an ashcan, or hear a sparrow, and yet recognize their potential:

The little sparrows
hop ingenuously
about the pavement
quarreling
with sharp voices
over those things
that interest them.
But we who are wiser
shut ourselves in
on either hand
and no one knows
whether we think good
or evil.¹

To shut one's self in, or out, is the denial that defeats birth. "Localism alone," Williams says, echoing Keyserling and Dewey, "can lead to culture (and this I give my life willingly to experience and to prove)." "It is the New World," he observes about Edgar Allan Poe as a literary forbear, "or to leave that for the better term, it is a *new locality* that is in Poe assertive; it is America, the first great burst through to expression of a re-awakened genius of *place*." The necessity is to settle in.

There are recognizable antecedents for such an attitude towards place, not only in the traditional American desire for a literature worthy of its mountains, but also in the general romantic tradition in which William Carlos Williams' poetry is so firmly established. The congruence of a poem with nature or the thing represented, as well as its reliance on nature or things, can only lead to an intensification of emotional response. Williams has shown how this works. Few Americans, for example, have written more persuasively about American flora than he has done, whether of the red lily, Queen-Ann's-Lace, a pot of flowers, or of "flowers by the sea" in the poem with that title:

When over the flowery, sharp pasture's
edge, unseen, the salt ocean

1. *Collected Earlier Poems* (New York, New Directions, 1951), p. 124.

lifts its form—chicory and daisies
tied, released, seem hardly flowers alone

but color and the movement—or the shape
perhaps—of restlessness, whereas

the sea is circled and sways
peacefully upon its plantlike stem²

Such pictures, the product of a sharp eye which regards with love, are enough to make the reputation of any poet, and perhaps only Frost among contemporaries can rival him in the creation of a landscape. No one can in the genre of still-life. But even such an achievement is not quite, in Williams' sense, the full realization of the genius of a place. That is the unmeasureable articulation of a mystique whose realization is a problem of diction and the various facets of structure.

One might say of William Carlos Williams that his mixed inheritance of British, French and Puerto Rican blood has made it impossible for him to do anything except to dig in, to locate himself somewhere. One might suspect too, perhaps, that the circumstance of his father's aloof unwillingness to accept citizenship in the country to which he had removed may have intensified the son's desire to be otherwise than ubiquitous. Or perhaps one could say of Williams that he had enough internationalism already in him, that he doesn't need any more of it for that very reason. "One might accuse him," Pound has said of his friend, "of being, blessedly, the observant foreigner, perceiving American vegetation and landscape quite directly, as something put there for him to look at; and his contemplative habit extends, also blessedly, to the fauna."

And yet, despite the advantage of such stimuli, the articulation of the mystique, even the recognition of the "genius of place," has not been easily achieved. He reports the difficulty in a simulated dialogue:

So you took to poetry.

The only way I could find was poetry—and prose to a lesser extent. So I gradually began to learn, very slowly. If I remember rightly it was more a

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 87.

matter of how I could cling to what I had and not relinquish it in the face of tradition than anything else.

It sounds very simple.

All you have to know is the meaning of the words—and let yourself go. Then what? What did you learn first?

That it isn't so easy to let yourself go. I had learned too much already, even before I started to write. I ran into good safe stereotype everywhere. Perfectly safe, that's why we cling to it. If I ducked out of that I ran into chaos.³

The question of stereotype was that of the grails and nightingales of rhetoric—the substance and dying habits of poetry to which the young Williams, like others of his generation, had been exposed by Pans in Wall Street, the Clarence Stedmans and the Henry Van Dykes. Or one might say the stereotypes were those traditional mannerisms of poetry which did not fit the local material, and which therefore held a man back from true citizenship, fearful lest, by jingo, the consequence should be patriotism rather than poetry.

There may be no better way to indicate the point from which Williams started, and by comparison of it with his later achievement to indicate how much that is healthy has happened to him and to American poetry (in part through him) in the last half-century, than to read a poem, entitled "The Uses of Poetry," from his first, now fortunately rare, volume *Poems*, published in Rutherford in 1909:

I've found anticipation of a day
O'erfilled with pure diversion presently,
For I must read a lady poesy
The while we glide by many a leafy bay,

Hid deep in rushes, where at random play
The glossy black winged May-flies, or whence flee
Hush-throated nestlings in alarm,
Whom we have idly frightened with our boat's long sway.

For, lest o'ersaddened by such woes as spring
To rural peace from our meek onward trend,
What else more fit? We'll draw the light latch-string

3. *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York, Random House, 1954), p. 77.

And close the door of sense; then satiate wend,
On poesy's transforming giant wing,
To worlds afar whose fruits all anguish mend.

There is perhaps no other way to speak of a poet than to quote the things which he has made, to test the poem as the thing itself. To look at "The Uses of Poetry" is to grasp almost without needing comment the sense of what Williams meant when he said, "I had learned too much already, even before I started to write." This "too much" came between him and what he was trying to see. The cliché, of course, has its uses in writing, but only when it is not compulsive, when it is recognized and used as a cliché, is controlled, has an organic relationship with the tone of what is presented. Williams has used the cliché in this controlled way, especially in his prose. "Now you can of course make a style out of clichés," Robert Penn Warren once remarked to me, "as William Carlos Williams has." Warren was speaking with respect for the craftsmanship of *Make it Light* and *First Act*, those remarkably effective and insufficiently applauded fictional renderings of American city life. They achieve for the city what Sherwood Anderson did for the village but could never quite realize elsewhere. This is listening to how people talk, to render that, to grasp its significance. But in "The Uses of Poetry" the stereotype takes the place both of what is seen and what is either thought or felt. "The language is worn out" when it should be fresh. "No ideas but in things," Williams likes to repeat, objectively. "No idea, no thing," is all one can say about such a poem. He would be the first to agree. It was important to leave it behind him. There are more uses of poetry in what he simply calls "Poem":

As the cat
climbed over
the top of

the jamcloset
first the right
forefoot

carefully
then the hind
stepped down

into the pit of
the empty
flowerpot⁴

Here there is directness of vision, of language, movement and structure. Lloyd Frankenberg's comment in *Invitation to Poetry* is sufficiently inclusive: "A completed action in just the number of words and no more time than it takes to tell it is a 'poem'."

Williams' first effective lessons as a poet must have been not unlike his first real lessons as a physician, to learn to describe as sharply, accurately, and simply as though one were a student of Agassiz assigned to a rock of Penikese. This was a lesson emphasized in the exercises of the Imagists and Objectivists with whom Williams had much in common. Nor has he lost this precision of vision, as "A Negro Woman" in *Journey to Love*, his most recent volume of verse,⁵ will testify. He has simply, and advantageously, added to his earlier successes in the same genre the stamp of more firmly controlled metrics and subsequently gained powers of rumination and absorption. The evidence is also in a poem like "The Sparrow," again from *Journey to Love*, which begins

This sparrow
 who comes to sit at my window
 is a poetic truth
more than a natural one.
 His voice,
 his movements,
his habits—
 how he loves to
 flutter his wings
in the dust—

4. *Op. cit.*, p. 340.

5. (New York, Random House, 1955).

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he must formalize relationships. "There is no poetry without formal invention," Williams can assert in his later years, seeing a necessity in formalism; but, Williams being no humanist, it must be a formalism which is not superimposed but arises from the nature of things, which is the "genius of place." The desire to put Paterson in poetry must have been long held by Williams, if one is to remember the various fragments bearing the name of the city which have appeared in his books of poems. Each renders an aspect, but an aspect only, as though he had not yet found the way to make them cohere. In the final *Paterson*, which is one of the major American poems of the twentieth century, he has taken the formal method of Pound's *Cantos* and localized it, brought the world home again. The man-city, the mountain-woman, the river which flows between them, the sense of marriage and divorce, the juxtaposition of the things of history and the things of nature, in picnic and prayer, strain and unite like the features of the century itself. *Paterson* is at the same time a further crystallization of his own, earlier, *In the American Grain*, its intensification in the present which holds the past in it. "The center of the poem is the locale," Williams can say both specifically and in generalization, but, at the same time that a poem is Paterson, "the province of the poem is the world."

The poet starts where he can start best, with what surrounds him. For if he cannot understand this, he is not likely to understand much else. "By listening to the language of his locality," Williams reminds us early and late, "the poet begins to learn his craft. It is his function to lift, by use of his imagination and the language he hears, the material conditions and appearances of his environment to the sphere of the intelligence where they will have new currency. Thus anything that the poet can effectively lift from its dull bed by force of the imagination becomes his material. Anything. The commonplace, the tawdry, the sordid all have their poetic uses if the imagination can lighten them."

By dedicating "The Sparrow" to his father, Williams gave him the citizenship his father had not found for himself. And proved that any place can be New Jersey.

To the Memory of Francesco Bianco

CHARLES NORMAN

THE INTRODUCTION of a new poet, one moreover who wrote in a foreign language, might be a labor to give one pause were it not, as in this case, a labor of love. I knew Francesco Bianco for more than twenty years—from 1924 to 1946, the year he died. But it was not until a few years before his death that I learned of his writing. How truly great and original he was I trust this little essay, with its examples of his work, will make clear. He had made some extremely effective translations for friends like myself who could not read the Italian originals, and after his death Willard R. Trask continued the work of translating at my request. An edition of the Italian poems, with English versions, is in preparation.

What sets a poet—or, indeed, any artist—apart from his numerous fellow craftsmen? The explanations have been many and varied, and more suited to certain times and certain places than found to embody a universal application. For the present, Cyril Connolly's praise of the English painter, Sickert, in *The Condemned Playground*, appears to strike the right note: "We are conscious not only of superb technique," he wrote, "but of the sacred moment, of the absorption of the painter in what he sees, which by talent and patience he is able to communicate. It is the communication of this sacred moment which constitutes a work of art."

I believe that by substituting "poet" for "painter" in Mr. Connolly's text, Bianco's work will be seen to fulfill the requirements of this excellent definition. Mr. Trask, one of the foremost translators of our time, has characterized Bianco's Italian poems as "a unique blend of symbolism with classicism, marked by an extraordinarily subtle music and the utmost purity of diction. They are like a dream—with solid roots." To this I wish only to add that the translations offered here seem to me to be completely satisfying as works in English. If the test of art is a new experience—as distinct from imitation or productions which are mere reawakeners of past emotions—then these poems

are successful. The ideas are fresh, the images enchanting, and the overall emotional intensity is such as to leave a reader with a discoverer's exaltation.

Eleven Poems by Francesco Bianco¹

I. Ancient Metres

Which was the day we met at Adam's house
To talk of poetry? Every branch was jeweled
With April buds; throughout the world one felt
Ultimate madness burning like a flame.

And, on the morrow, one with rod and line
Placidly fished the lake; another dealt
A round of cards, and laughed and drank with friends;
Another conned the old, sweet verb *to love*.

But neither wine nor cards, nor rod and line,
Nor yet more fervent game, can claim again
The troubled spirit, lost and wandering.

In the dim labyrinth mazes of his art,
Pondering ancient metres, seeking still
To clothe in verse deep wounds, and deeper grief.

II. Feather

Time consumes each word:
time, and poor usage, and a negligent style;
but the Poet invests with grace
noble and base alike, and he gives weight to a feather.

1. Poems I-VI translated by Francesco Bianco; VII-XI by Willard R. Trask.

Every word reveals to him its sweetness,
as does a woman to her lover in close joy,
who trembles, and smiles, and whispers, "Ah, never,
for you my youth, my youth must never die."

Ravished, he notes; and one day, if the Dark
Muse demands it, remembering all, he recalls
those sounds to life; and in an airy frame
of flowers, and marbles, and heartbeats, and green boughs,

builds he a garden paradisial,
shining in never-ending spring;
But in that garden none but the desperate may enter—
none but he who has drunk, Dionysius! thy wine.

Ah, why did I not know these things
in my mad April days, my mad, my fleeting April,
which I wasted wandering without rest,
and exiled from the laurels and the rose?

Now that I am become slow at the fierce game of love,
and I lack the poet's craft,
I cannot tell which it is—more cruel,
or more useless—the fire that burns me up.

But steadfast against all hazards, good or bad,
you, Poet, stand! outlasting the long years;
and you smile to the sorry pupil, who is searching for you,
with wet eyes, in the Anthology;

and you call him, you invite him to that garden,
which he glimpsed once, and hardly hopes to enter.
Let your spring blossom for him, too—
Let happiness sing to him in your language.

III. One Certain Spot

If to some ultimate land of your desire
You journey, craving one last certain place
Where, at the end of all, you may find rest—
Seek! You shall find it there, where lazily,

More lazily the rivers flow, the tigers yawn,
And vast stretches the prairie, like a sea;
While black against the immense, the azure sky,
Gather and circle, soaring overhead,

A thousand vultures, waiting with fixed eyes,
Ever intent, scenting delight afar—
The warm, tender, succulent, odorous!

There, solitary through the centuries, a poplar
Keeps for you in its shade one certain spot—
There you will stop, and eat, and sleep, content.

IV. A Cry

March is recalling to that wonder-shore
the swallows, for the hill again is green:
and the wind brings, the wind scatters them,
yet each one finds its own beloved nest.

Ah, blessed is that child, the child who breathes
the essence of the orange, of the quince:
that child who, lost, all lost in his young dream,
looks, and does not perceive what his eyes see.

His mother calls him, offers him some bread;
fresh bread gives she him, but he pays no heed:
he takes it, nibbles . . . life is safe, so he
lives not today; he lives the splendid morrow.

Those days have flown, and comes the real today:
come the bad times; the unfriendly times are here;
comes hunger, comes exile, comes the hard toil;
only in a dream an old man goes back home.

In a dream he revisits that dear nest;
he has become a swallow, he can fly:
he is flying, and oh, how glad is he;
but the joy wakes him, and he cries a cry.

And everyone of you knows of what nest
I speak, in tears; knows what land that is;
knows what a sorrow this my verse enfolds:
he knows the sadness of a cry for home.

V. Copa

In vain seeks he for pleasure nowadays,
Pondering *Copa*—is it apocryphal?
One who, long wandering the high roads of Europe,
Lived those intoxicating ancient springs.

Whoever you are—Unknown—Virgil, maybe:
Forgive me if your dancer can no more,
Caught in the winged hexameter, make glad
One who is weary of his long exile.

Listless I read that *Copa* sways her flanks
To the castanet's rattle . . . But I knew,
I knew thee, *Copa*! in the Golden Age,
Who am now whitening in the Age of Lead.

VI. Lakes

Last, last of all, in this high night of dews,
late searching through old, fabulous Mays,

I picture you, Isolde! deluded, as you touch
Under the sheet a cold, an icy sword.

Loyal . . . disloyal? . . . O sorry, sorry blade!
Offense to love, insidious, and how much more
if, tenderly, an echo of the Latin Muse
whisper *O sweet, sweet is the sleep of lovers.*

O Latin wisdom! What a pupil,
What a poor pupil your life-giving bosom
nourished in me, who still half-dreaming waits
for her to return once more to longing autumn.

In vain the beech spreads its clear shining gold,
In vain the maple reddens every bough;
no more will you loosen your golden hair
over the clear, the cold crystal lakes.

How ever forget the name of her
who so loved autumn? Ever in their plaint
the leaves repeat it over, and the wind:
Where are you? O where are you? Where?

And now I waken, as the cock cries harsh;
I feel, and grope. "Where are you, sweet one?"
I am here . . . I am here . . . The cold wave has taken me . . .
I am here . . . fainting . . . in the crystal lakes.

All is now still . . . but suddenly a horse,
far in the valley, neighs . . . or does he laugh?
I am here . . . I am here . . . Don't let me die . . .
I am here, weeping by the crystal lakes.

And now dawn sparkles in the coral skies;
I call and call . . . and no voice answers me:
I am here I am here I am the last the fair one
I am cold at the bottom of the crystal lakes.

VII. What Best Pleases Me

No friend to me is he, nor is he my friend,
Who seeks in me only the self that laughs;
Who much frequents me, and has never seen
That what best pleases me I do not speak.

I am pleased enough to sit on a bench
And drink good wine and say, "A hell of a government!"
But more it pleases me, in winter's season,
To watch alone through the towering, pallid night.

To him who talks rubbish, I talk rubbish—
And therein I practice high courtesy;
But not because I do not better love
The lofty forest! and the weeping peaks!

VIII. The Things

The things that please you—they are known
To the sea's medusas and anemones,
To the pulsing fronds that slowly
Undulate from bitter shells.

The orchards know what pleases you, if in April
A rosy rain falls on you;
And, in autumn, the dews know,
Under the more delicate rising moon.

The fruit that grows golden in the late sun
Pleases you, I know; and, because you are mine, I know
That you love singing poetry
Made of few and magical words.

IX. That Leaf

No, there is no ship that sails,
There is no road that guides,
To that Elysium of the dead,
To those aerial shores,

To that true country, whose citizens
Are we, the eternal wanderers,
We, the ecstatic lovers
Of a severe Muse:

Only he who is reborn to life
Shall know poetry;
Only for him who feeds on grief
Is virgin melody:

No, that leaf is not for him to pluck
Who does not learn the language
Of the wind there in the foliage,
Of the journeying clouds;

Who has not known, under a crimson evening,
The course of a stream as it attains the sea:
Over chill lakes floating, the final
Heroic voice of the swan.

X. On a Look

Shrilling, where ocean roars loudest,
The sea-mew darts on its prey among the foamy waves,
Exulting . . . And you, you dare not seize
Happiness, fleeing happiness . . .

See how the bee, in ecstasy, sucks
Nectar: life . . . Watch the deer, desirous,

Lick one another, hidden amid the leaves . . .
Listen: Queen Pasiphae to the tawny bull

Bellows, insatiate . . .
In the deep woods, the panthers howl,
Savage and hoarse; what thirst . . .

She speaks not, but her look is a summons,
Offering you joy: joy, in such a net . . .
What matter? Joy. Joy, O Thou divine!

XI. Halcyon

To the chill northern waters,
To the blue archipelagoes,
A halcyon flies, white winged:
Antique myth created it eternal.

White halcyon, forsake me not—
Halcyon born of Greek anguish,
Halcyon created only to console
The heart that feeds on fables.

A people of imagination feigned you
In the early centuries: your cradle
Was the foamy crest of the breaking wave
In the wan dark of a moonless night

When to the golden-tressed goddess
The sailor prays in vain, exhausted; and his nails slacken,
And numb he sinks into the shadowy deeps
Where viscid sponges throb.

From struggles such as these, you rise, a miracle:
You tint the dawn with rose; with a cry
Of hope and mourning, you still the waves;
On their blue mirror you make your nest.

Francesco Bianco was born in Turin, Italy, March 13, 1878. He attended the University of Turin, and afterwards went to England, where he worked at Zaehnsdorf's, the famous binders and book dealers of London. At a club frequented by writers and artists he met Margery Williams who, as Margery Bianco, became well known for her juvenile classics. (A niece of Mrs. Bianco married Eugene O'Neill, and their daughter, Oona, married Charles Chaplin.) Two children were born to the Biancos in London—Francesco, who followed in his father's footsteps as a bibliographer, and Pamela, who became a painter. Shortly after the birth of Pamela, the family went to live in Paris, where Mr. Bianco became manager of the rare book department of Brentano's. After four years in Paris the Biancos returned to London, where they lived in Golder's Green. In a memorial volume about her mother,² Pamela Bianco has recalled something of the enchantment of that period before World War I, when "most of the tradesmen's wagons were drawn by horses" and "Sunday morning walks were usually upon Hampstead Heath." Her father had a shop in Charing Cross. "One day he discovered a very rare book printed by William Caxton, and in order to celebrate its sale he bought my mother a brindled English bulldog, whom she named Caxton." She also recalled: "When I was five years old my father taught me the poetry of William Butler Yeats."

After three years in London, the Biancos moved once more, this time to Turin, where they resided at No. 21 Via Cassini for five years. Caxton accompanied them. For most of this period Bianco was director of the Corona Film Company which, like most film enterprises of the time, specialized in melodramas and the supernatural. In 1915 Italy entered the war, and he was called up for military service. Pamela Bianco wrote: "He became a captain in the Italian army and was stationed through one winter as commander in a military prison, high up in the cold mountains at Fenestrelle. Later he was appointed supervisor in the rice-growing district of Vercelli." After the Armistice the family went back to London.

And here it may be well to say a few words about Pamela Bianco's career, intertwined as it was with her father's for several years. She

2. *Writing and Criticism: A Book for Margery Bianco*. Edited by Anne Carroll Moore and Bertha Mahony Miller. (Boston, The Horn Book, Inc., 1951).

became internationally famous at the age of twelve with an exhibition of her drawings at the Leicester Galleries. One result of this exhibition was the book *Flora*, with poems, inspired by her pictures, by Walter de la Mare. In 1921 Bianco brought her to the United States for exhibitions of her work in New York and elsewhere.

At the time I first met him he was living with his wife and children on Grove Street in Greenwich Village. The past weaves its own spell, making everyone look backward; in the depths of the past the Bianco apartment glows again with the hospitality of decent human-kind. One met a famous man or woman now and then, but their fame had little to do, I imagine, with their presence there. Bianco, in any case, treated all his guests alike, since all his guests were friends.

Perhaps he was such a good host because he was himself such good company. Yet, at a certain period, there were difficulties which must have been very much on his mind. The stock market crash of 1929 ended, probably forever, the kind of book collecting from which

FRANCESCO BIANCO BY PAMELA BIANCO



he made a living. As a matter of fact, so little could be made from his stock by 1930 or 1931 that he stored it all, and it was not sold until after his death. While in the book business in New York, Bianco also ventured into publishing, but not for long. His books were beautifully designed and printed—and published, of course, in limited editions. One of them, I recall, was *Natives of Rock*, a book of poems by Glenway Wescott.

His last years were lonely and full of frustrations. His children were married. The death of his wife in 1944 left him the sole occupant of an apartment thronged by memories. I think it also left him without the will to live. I hope he found some solace in composing his poems. He worked them over and over, as the different drafts, neatly stapled together, show; and he must have known their worth. Nevertheless, in 1946, he said to me: "I am an exile—I can have no audience." The poem, "A Cry," may convey to readers what mere speech is unable to do. Only a few of his poems had then appeared, and only in a friend's column in an Italian newspaper in New York.

It was probably too late for him to return to his beloved Italy. He was sixty-eight years old. A quarter century of associations was here, his children and grandchildren were here, and his friends were here. Six months before his death he became a naturalized American citizen. His last months, which were months of illness and lethargy, were spent in the home of his son in Arlington, Virginia. He died there of bronchial pneumonia, July 21, 1946.

In person he was short and spare with a neat figure. He had blue eyes and sandy hair which had once been bright red. He was very handsome as a young man; a photograph of him which his daughter showed me is suggestive of Keats. There is the same prominent nose, the same luminous and intellectual quality in his face. Indeed, there was an affinity between them, on Bianco's part of affection as well as poetry, for he often mentioned Keats, and always with tenderness. He was puzzled by the rage of the reviewers who had dealt Keats such dreadful blows. It was a recurrent theme with him. In a mixture of astonishment and indignation he would say: "Why, anyone who read only the first line of his first book—'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill'—should have known he was a poet." Presumably he did not know, or

had forgotten, the political nature of most of the attacks.

He had a ready wit, and was quick to see the ridiculous lurking everywhere, for he seemed to be able to invoke it at will. In the deflation of too serious or merely pompous persons he showed real artistry, for he always began tentatively and even deferentially to differ before going on to quibble and spoof. But when he was once fairly launched there was no stopping him, and it was sometimes a question whether his eyes were flashing indignation at an opponent's stupidity or triumph at his own feats of demolition.

He was an accomplished linguist. I have been present when, in strange restaurants, he pin-pointed a French, German or Italian waiter's birthplace by his accent. He belonged at one time to a club where all business was transacted in Latin. (One of its members translated *Robinson Crusoe* and *Treasure Island* into Latin.) He spoke English fluently and was extremely well read in it. Like all true classicists he despised shoddy writing, and could be devastating over a single inept sentence. I must confess that his strictures were sometimes humorless as well as merciless. He was also contemptuous of writers who used foreign phrases in their work without a real knowledge of the language they were borrowed from. Pound's Italian he often found faulty.

Generally, however, he wore his learning lightly, though he could never resist a malicious pleasure in correcting the intellectuals. In simpler company he never tried to overawe those whose education and tastes were different from his own. He admired Cummings greatly, and Housman and de la Mare. He often quoted Moréas, and had made a translation—for Eugene O'Neill—of Rimbaud's "Bateau Ivre." A favorite Italian poet was Carducci. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* was a book he read over and over, and he was fond of reading aloud the famous passage in praise of Iona in Johnson's *Journey*. (I owe to Bianco my first introduction to the *Life*; I have had, and have given away, many editions since, but can never, I suppose, forget the feel and look of the two-volume, blue-bound Oxford edition which he gave me at his country place in Connecticut when I was a young man.)

Surprisingly for a poet, he knew Euclid by heart, and his son, whom he taught to enjoy mathematics, says there was no classical theorem in geometry which his father could not prove. He was also a

skillful chess and card player with—I fear—a tendency to crow over his victories. And he could cook. A world of vanished delights is compressed in these four words. He cooked without fuss—with his left hand, as it were; and intricate, aromatic dishes appeared almost without a break in the conversation. The shopkeepers of Bleeker Street welcomed him, for he brought not only pleasant Northern Italian speech into their shops, but a discerning, seasonal eye.

In his last years there was a slight stoop to his shoulders. Time and grief had done their worst, and he lived alone. But company worked like magic on his moods, in company he was renewed, and I think he would have succeeded in charming a misanthrope as easily as he charmed everyone who met him. An attractive woman writes: "He was certainly a ravishing conversationalist. He could make one forget that he was twice one's age and half one's size—speaking personally." For men as well as women he had that almost extinct social grace which confers on the person just met not only warmth of welcome but interest in his or her concerns. It was sincere; he had a real feeling for people to which, of course, they responded. All who knew him recall him with affectionate phrases, and recall almost as a special gift of his how often he made cheerfulness break through. He had another gift which seemed hardly of our time—letter-writing; his friends can testify to the pleasures of his voluminous correspondence. His letters were neither niggardly nor delayed, and they were written in a beautiful script like copperplate engraving.

"They will come no more, the old men with beautiful manners."

Memory of Meeting Yeats, AE, Gogarty, James Stephens

RICHARD EBERHART

AFTER MY FIRST YEAR at Cambridge I made a trip to Ireland. I went to Limerick to see if I could locate any Ghormleys. I had been given this middle name for my maternal grandmother, who had thirteen children in America. I found no Ghormleys. I walked and bicycled on the west coast. Returning to Dublin I met James Stephens and Miss MacNie, AE, Miss Sarah Purser, Gogarty, and Yeats. After a lapse of twenty-eight years I discovered a letter written upon returning from Ireland to Cambridge (October 13, 1928), apparently never sent and probably written as a diary to preserve these early literary memories. The letter follows:

"My bag was still lost, and I was staying at 84 Lower Baggot Street, wherein I was flea bitten beyond the point of tolerance, until I had a hide in motley, and it was while the flea was omnipotent that I suffered martyrdom but recreated my Valencia island afternoon and wrote a poem by candlelight to forget the jumping army.

"At Ely Place I called on Oliver St. John Gogarty. He showed me his first editions, pointed out of the window to the garden in which George Moore used to write, showed me a personal picture (and a sword) just received from the Kaiser, and when I saw a shelf of Nietzsche I rejoiced, for we had considerable in common. Gogarty asked me if I would like to meet his friend Lord Dunsany, and said he would send me to him at once, but asked if I knew his works, and when I said no, he made a jest and said it would be impossible, for odd Dunsany talks only of himself. I liked Gogarty's frankness and his wit: he said all Yeats needed was a mistress, that Yeats was a cult like Rossetti and (more important, I add) that Ireland's literary renaissance would die out surely, and that proud as they were, Ireland was but a part of Great Britain. Gogarty was reading Pindar. He

talked intelligently about Greece and Rome. Would you like to meet Yeats? He's leaving for Rapallo soon, as he is supposed to be an invalid. Come to my house at nine o'clock Thursday, Yeats and AE will be there . . .

"At nine in the evening, Thursday, I knocked several times. The maid let me into the drawing room upstairs. A fat man was sitting in a chair, and a man with his back to me was sitting on a divan before the fire. Gogarty arose, greeted me, the gray-headed man turned, and I was introduced to Yeats. I noticed the shortness of his fingers and the soft texture of his hand when he made the polite gesture, and was struck by the height and physique of Yeats. He wore glasses, a soft blue shirt with a bow tie, his coat was open and one button of his waistcoat was unbuttoned. A magnificent head! His voice had a querulous quality in it. Sometimes he ran his hand through his long iron-gray hair, which lay back from his temples in gentle strands. Coffee was brought, and I was sitting beside Yeats on the divan. The conversation, after Yeats had asked me two civil questions about America and Cambridge, became at once animated concerning the Censorship Bill to be brought up in the Dail Eireann. The Catholics want to censor everything from birth control to 'immoral' literature, and even propose, like ostriches with their heads in the sand, to allow no printed mention to be made anywhere of venereal disease, thinking, in a most peculiarly Irish illogic, that they can do away with an evil by refusing to see any mention made of it. Senator Yeats made a jest about contraception. The party was indeed animated with serious discussion of all points of the bill. The intelligentsia of Ireland is limited to a few. These members of the Senate were the center of that group which upholds tolerance and a desire for widespread education. Yeats said that nothing about the body was evil, he pleaded for the Doric discipline, and wanted practical education. The fat man, some editor, left, and Gogarty brought a bottle of claret. There was a knock below, and Gogarty went to welcome AE.

"Yeats had been anxious for AE to come, as he wanted to get him to write some editorial apropos of the Censorship Bill in his *Irish Statesman*. It was about 9:45 and while I was alone with him he said it would do no good. Impassioned he arose and made an impetuous gesture with his arms, yet there was ennui in it, saying

he was to give his last speech in the Senate on October 10, but that it would do no good, that 'he would only make another of his impassioned speeches' and the unenlightened would rule. It was touching to realize the meaning of this. Yeats had given years to the service of his State; it was futile; he must retire to Italy and have no longer an active part either in the Government or in the Abbey Theater.

"AE came in, I retired from the divan to a proper chair farther off, Gogarty gave AE a cigar and the talk became so fervent that the tea was forgotten when it was brought. AE sat in a chair near the fireplace. I could see his right profile, and noted the fine texture of his skin, and the little depression the frame of his glasses made from ear to eye socket.

"One thing led to another, and I had been quiet until Gogarty opened up a discussion about the Chamberlain subterranean treaty note with France in the face of the Kellogg pact, and announced, almost, the next war, which will take place in twenty years between England and America. Ireland must have a port, Galway, to claim U.S.-Europe shipping, and thus would claim neutrality. England would conspire to have a break between Japan and America, then subtly would come in as the aggressor, send her fleet to our eastern shores, and it would be a battle of the air. This was so absurd, and so Irish, that I did not get excited at first, but AE said he had talked in closet with an important American educator, to be unnamed, about the same possibility, and Yeats took it in and added a word now and then, until the discussion took on such a sinister aspect that I felt as if doom were upon us and the destruction of the civilized world. I argued that our airships had the advantage of swooping off our own shores, that even if our coast cities were damaged the people could retreat inland, that Canada, South Africa, and possibly India might sever from the Empire, that England was not friends with Russia and could get no supplies, but was rebutted that England is still the gold center of the world, and that it would be an economic conflict. There was much reviewing of past civilizations, Greece, the fall of Rome, and statements that sooner or later an intolerable balance of power would be between England and America: inevitably one must fall, by war. It is significant that I heard all this talk in Ireland! And have never heard a breath of it in England!

"When the war was over, quelled by excellent tea, the conversation turned to scholarship, poetry, and the humanities. I only remember Yeats' views on two persons. Speaking of Baldwin he said he was much more intelligent than he had expected him to be; and after sincerely lauding Baldwin, he turned to Gogarty and said, 'Gogarty, he has studied politics as you and I have never studied poetry.' And about T. E. Lawrence, after lauding his self-effacement after heroism, he said, 'That act should be a great thing in history.' But these sentences appear a little absurd out of full context.

"We looked at our watches, it was near midnight, AE had gone a while before, so Gogarty helped us on with our coats, and I felt as little as possible as if I were with the poet Yeats. We walked into the night, and went the same way for a few blocks together, and there was nothing to say. Yeats was to make his last speech in the Senate, he was going from his island to Italy, and if I had thought of it, when I turned and walked into the night, I would have said, 'Sweet joy befall thee'."

It is circumstantial to be old enough to try to psychoanalyze one's former self. I give the letter as it was written, with minor changes. Yet I know that I was afraid to express fully my feelings at the end of the Yeats episode. I remember these feelings very clearly. At that time I had not yet published a book. I had boundless belief in poetry and wanted more than anything to be a poet. I had already begun, but knew that Yeats could not know of my early, just sprung work. I idolized Yeats, and AE and James Stephens, all the literary men who were kind to me and were interested in me in Dublin, beyond the telling. I worshipped them. So that while I was walking a few blocks from Gogarty's house with Yeats in the dark night, I had an intense perception of his greatness and immortality. I had whirling words to say, to tell him how much I enjoyed his poetry, but this frenzy was quieted by common sense. I hated to take each step for I knew that up the street soon he would go one way, I another. I would turn off and go alone in the dark to my own place and dispensation. He would go straight on and I knew I would never see him again, as indeed turned out to be the case. I was having high drama walking along. Yeats seemed in deep thought, heavily medi-

tating, looking straight ahead and saying nothing. We spoke no word. How thrilling it was! I was speaking millions of words to him. I was so sensitive I wondered nervously about the common civilities. Should I say goodnight? Should I mutter some polite phrase? Actually, the most eloquent thing happened, an eloquence of silence. When we came, walking together in the Irish night of literary time, to the predestined corner, he did not look at me and I did not look at him. I turned off right-face on my street and we parted forever without a word.

I recall going to the Literary Club (its actual name escapes me) in Dublin. There were perhaps twenty men for lunch there in an old, comfortable room. What was remarkable was that James Stephens held sway for an hour or more, keeping everybody in laughter. His wit was engaging, authoritative, total. Nobody else could speak. I cannot recall a word he said, but remember the remarkable effect he made. It was electrifying. His extreme shortness was no hindrance to a Gargantuan comic sense. His wit had a staccato quality. Everybody burst out laughing again and again, abandoned to his rapier-like thrusts.

I recall another time when Stephens and I called on Miss MacNie, who drew the famous cartoon of Yeats and AE. I remember the quantities of Irish whisky Stephens consumed at her place and again the lightning quality of his wit. He had a gnome-like quality, a strong head on a short stalk.

Of the Irish poets then in Dublin I knew AE best. He used to invite me to his office where I passed a number of unforgettable afternoons. He was then editor of *The Irish Statesman*. (About a year later it came to an end; in its last number he reviewed fully my first book.)

AE had painted the walls of his office with somewhat mystical and mystifying paintings depicting imaginary or historical Indian scenes. He would sit behind his big desk looking out over his long gray beard through thick glasses, a heavy, introspective man, and talk by the hour in the most mellifluous voice I had heard. He told endless legendary tales from Indian mythology or talked about vision-

ary poetry. He put me into a kind of trance the like of which I have never experienced in listening to any other poet. It was a most pleasant sensation. While I would ask questions now and then I recall these sessions as primarily monologues. AE was content to talk on in his soft voice from deep sources of memory and imagination, creating a dream-like consciousness and atmosphere. He spoke mature wisdom yet he was ever as gentle as a child.

On Sunday evenings he and his wife were at home at their house. I attended on several occasions. After an hour or two of literary talk there was always the question whether AE would show his paintings. After some coaxing and as a climax to these intimate evenings, he would bring forth from a back room several canvases, all of them showing variations on a white nymph or nymphs dancing in a dark wood. They all had a characteristic chiaroscuro. They all pointed to some strange, heavenly place where there was serenity, peace, and exaltation. These canvases were usually small, but they had the ethereal quality of his verse. After the paintings had been shown and explained, it was time for the guests to depart, which they always did with reluctance.

Apple Buds¹

RICHARD EBERHART

Apple buds will never bloom
But to remind me of her room,
Impersonally proffering
Spring, when she was suffering.
She cannot take them in her hand
Again. I cannot understand
Her suffering, her suffering.
It is brutality to sing.

1. See note on Eberhart in Contributors' column.

Persia and the Holy Grail

ARTHUR UPHAM POPE

FOR NEARLY a thousand years the peoples of Europe were intensely absorbed and emotionally agitated by a series of strange legends about a sacred object of magical power called the Holy Grail. These legends were varied, confused and sometimes inconsistent, for in the course of their development they had been elaborated with details from folklores of several European and Oriental cultures. Yet from the eleventh to the nineteenth century a common and general faith was fervently accepted: there is a land far, far away, mysterious, inaccessible—an earthly paradise that lies at the true center of the world. There, crowning a great mountain, is a castle or temple of fabulous splendor containing the most precious of all objects, the Grail itself, charged with self-generating, self-renewing, overflowing abundance. An object of awe and reverence, the supreme goal of all desire, the ultimate secret of power and perfection, the divine symbol of life itself, its virtue will be imparted to whatever youth of noble birth can attain to it, even behold it.

This strange and deeply moving concept of the Grail permeated the entire consciousness of Mediaeval Europe, everywhere kindling fervid enthusiasm, appearing constantly not only in folklore, legend and romance, and in various decorative and ritual arts, but also in architecture which from time to time sought to reproduce the Temple of the Grail according to accepted descriptions, hoping thus to share in, and perpetuate, the magic virtues of the holy object.

The idea had a very long history, was probably ultimately derived from man's earliest fertility myths and rituals, vitalized and sustained by man's universal and persistent search for the elusive secret of life. Although never specifically sanctioned by ecclesiastical authority, it was finally, in later mediaeval times, assimilated to the Christian doctrine of the Redemption, the Grail being identified, alternatively, as the cup in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the blood of Christ or as the Chalice of the Last Supper, symbolizing man's ultimate salvation

through divine Grace. "Through this fusion," writes J. M. E. Ross, "there was fashioned one of the richest influences which have ever inspired music, poetry and art." The Grail was "an abiding symbol for the moral and spiritual idealism of pilgrim humanity." Even in the late nineteenth century the legend was again given moving expression in Tennyson's very popular *Idylls of the King*, in Wagner's *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal*, which aroused pious fervor in several countries, and in Edwin Abbey's sumptuous murals in the Boston Public Library.

In short, the Grail legend entered into the language, the ideas and emotions of the Western world, kindling imagination and enhancing a central feature of Christian faith.

European scholars have for generations sought for the origins of this potent cult which evoked such ancient faith even though not inculcated by the Church. A substantial body of erudite research has been built up, but it has not yet provided a satisfactory explanation of how and where it all began. The consensus has been, until very recently, that the Grail stories were generated chiefly from French and Celtic sources, beginning in part as far back as the ninth century, with some earlier traces.

Some scholars, however, have suggested that the legend had been adapted from a pagan cult (notably, Jessie Weston, who focused chiefly on Adonis traditions); others, that it was a universal, ever-recurring theme born out of man's own deepest experience (a form of the "independent parallel invention hypothesis," proposed, for example, by Gaster). Still others (Wesselovsky, Staerk) saw Oriental derivations, not only in the rich romantic coloring, but also in some of the central ideas, notably certain marked resemblances to Babylonian fertility rituals and the magical renewal of abundance, which was also a primary function of the Grail. Finally, there were those (Nyberg, Herzfeld) who proposed a Persian location for the Castle of the Grail—Herzfeld, because he thought that the conventional description of the Grail castle resembled the ruined Palace of Ardashir dramatically crowning a cliff in Southern Persia, which might therefore have been the original model.

No one of these divergent theories has ever quite convinced a majority of serious scholars, each in turn being too general or lacking

specific confirming evidence. So until recently the origin of the Grail legends has remained speculative and controversial. But as one scholar (Ross) wrote nearly fifty years ago: "It must always be remembered that the discovery of some hitherto concealed manuscript might throw a flood of light on the whole subject and rearrange the knowledge now possessed."

That fortunate moment seems now to have arrived, and has been enriched with several apparently unrelated discoveries of critical importance which have been correlated and interpreted by a scholar of remarkable ability, Professor Lars Ivar Ringbom of Finland; and his conclusions point to Asian origins for the central concepts.¹

The starting point was the publication by Dr. Werner Wolf in 1942 of a recently discovered manuscript, with certain variants, of the poem *Der Jüngere Titurel*, by Albrecht (whose last name is unknown, though for a time he was called "von Scharffenberg"), written in 1270.² This professes to give a comprehensive account of the Grail, based on a compilation and completion of earlier writers like Wolfram von Eschenbach. Albrecht devotes 112 lines to a quite specific description of the Grail Temple (the first that we have) and its site, Mount Salvat, so specific, even to measurements, that it seems to be reporting fact rather than poetic fancy.

Many attempts have been made on the basis of this description theoretically to reconstruct the Grail Temple and to associate with it some known structures.³ None, however, has been satisfactory, largely because the manuscripts of Albrecht's poem specify impossible dimensions, and cite 72 radial chapels—a number that defeats any feasible structural plan. Now Werner Wolf's publication, resting on the oldest and best manuscript, shows that the text should read 22, not 72 (for the purposes of the investigation a decisive number), and that the colossal dimensions are not affirmed in the original poem—corrections that result in a plan quite possible of construction.

Albrecht's description of the temple is somewhat confused by the inclusion of characteristic features of a Romanesque or perhaps

1. *Graal Tempel und Paradies*. Stockholm, 1951.

2. Grundsätzliches zu einer Ausgabe des Jüngeren Titurel. *Ztschr. f. dtsch. Altertum*, Bd. 79, S. 49-113, 209-248.

3. Cf. Ringbom, *op. cit.*, Chaps. I, IV.

Armenian church, which was not unknown, but at the core of his account are specific elements, quite foreign and exotic, clearly referring to some reality beyond the conventional and familiar—a domed structure surrounded by 22 radial chapels or arched recesses, with many distinctive decorative features, and set on a quite unusual and specifically described site.

As Albrecht tells it: In the Land of Salvation, in the Forest of Salvation, lies a solitary mountain called the Mountain of Salvation which King Titurel surrounded by a wall and on which he built a costly castle that he gave to serve as the Temple of The Grail, "because the Grail at that time had no fixed place, but floated, invisible, in the air." The Temple "was built of noble stone." The Mountain consisted of onyx and on the top grass, plants and a layer of earth were stripped off, uncovering the onyx which was levelled and polished until it shone like the moon. The resulting platform was one *klafter* (fathom: 6 feet) thick and from the edge of the steps to the temple walls it was 5 *klafter* (30 feet) wide.

The Temple itself was domed, round and high. It was roofed with gold and the interior of the dome was encrusted with sapphires, representing the blue vault of Heaven, and set with glistening carbuncles to mark the stars. The golden sun and silver moon moved through the Zodiac, and golden cymbals announced the seven canonical hours. "Neither inside or out is there a handsbreadth of the Temple that is not richly ornamented." Everywhere was gold, niello, enamel, enriched with jewels or set with colored stones. Precious alowood was used for the seats. Doors and railings were covered with gold. All want and poverty were banished far from the vicinity of the Temple.

Now, as Ringbom has pointed out, there was, in the distant land of Persia, at the sacred city of Shiz, another and very famous building, of fabulous opulence, domed, gilded and jewel-encrusted, also endowed with magical powers, also warding off want and poverty, life-protecting and life-sustaining, also set on a mountain. This building had been seen by many, had been described by geographers and historians as well as poets and mystics, and a drawing of it, approximately contemporary, exists. Indeed, there are so many similarities between

these two buildings, their placement, structure and embellishment, their purposes and functions, that it seems as if they must be one and the same.

This other domed temple, perhaps the historical prototype of the Grail Temple, was the famous Takht-i-Taqdis, or Throne of Arches, commissioned by Chosroes II, the great Persian Sasanian King (590-628), and built at Shiz, the most sacred spot in the land, deep in the mountainous heart of Azerbaijan.⁴ Shiz was, like Persepolis, the spiritual capital of the kingdom. Here were preserved the chronicles of the dynasty. Here Shapur, who designated himself "Brother of the Sun and Moon," deposited a copy of the *Avesta* with commentaries and a supplementary encyclopedia of all the knowledge of the time. Shiz was the closely guarded repository of the religious, intellectual and political authority of empire. Here was the sovereign Fire-temple, the Adhargushnasp, from whose sacred fire were replenished the fires of the other Temples. Here was the reputed birthplace of Zoroaster; and here were striking physical properties, particularly a miraculous lake, a bottomless, brimming reservoir which maintained a constant level without regard to seasons; self-generating, self-renewing, of overflowing abundance, conferring life and plenty on the surrounding land—proof of its supernatural, beneficent character.

Chosroes built his Takht as a thanksgiving for a victory which saved the régime, but it was not devised for ostentatious self-glorification. It was really a national effort, an expression of the national faith. It was not a throne in the ordinary sense, but a great pavillion, accommodating, round the King, a thousand of his nobles. Here the King, surrogate on earth of God, performed the crucial seasonal rites—the potent ceremonies which, by sympathetic magic, assisted the calendrical rotation, assuring the cooperation of the heavenly powers—the sun, moon, stars and rains—which were necessary for fertility, even, indeed, for the continued life of the people. It was thus, like Persepolis, a holy, cosmic structure, with the same supernatural function, and like Persepolis it had to be of utmost splendor, a supreme effort

4. Cf. Arthur Christiansen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*. Copenhagen, 1936: references to "Takht-i-Taqdis". Shiz also reported at some length in Arabic and Persian sources: Asma (8th, 9th century); Ibn Khurdabih (9th c.); Tabari (9th, 10th c.); Masudi (10th c.); Ibn al Faqir (10th c.); Misar (10th c.); Yaqut (13th c.); Firdausi (10th c.); al Tha'alibi (10th c.); Mustawfi (14th c.).

of king and nation. Indeed, for its construction Chosroes, with the consent of the nobles, lavished on it a sizeable, even imprudent proportion of the national treasure—and a formidable amount that was, thanks to the tribute which poured into the Iranian State coffers from most of Western Asia, and even parts of India and China.

The Takht was built of precious woods; cedar and teak, overlaid with much gold. Only gold and silver nails were used. The risers of the steps were gold. The balustrades—like those of the Grail Temple—were gold; and again like the Grail Temple, the Takht was heavily encrusted with jewels. As in the Grail Temple, blue stones symbolized the sky—lapis lazuli and turquoise in the Takht, sapphires in the Grail Temple. In the Takht golden astronomical tables—which could be changed according to season—were set in the dome, and on these the stars were marked by rubies, recalling that the stars in the dome of the Grail Temple likewise were marked with red jewels—carbuncles, often rubies, though they might be other stones, provided they were red, for example, garnets. In both the sun and moon were displayed, rendered in precious metal. The astronomical adjustment of the Takht went even further: the whole building was set on rollers above a (hidden) pit in which horses worked a mechanism that turned the structure round through the Four Quarters, so that at every season it would be in correct correspondence with the heavens, thus making more potent the celebration of the appropriate rituals.

All the rest of the ornamentation and equipment of the Persian Temple were likewise of a magnificence and extravagance that only an unlimited imagination, unlimited funds and a great occasion could command. Its beauty and splendor would focus, so it was felt, the sympathetic attention and participation of the heavenly powers. The most sacred area, in the center, was enclosed in a vast curtain embroidered in gold, the patterns including the major astral symbols. Gold and silver braziers warmed the individual nobles while the upper arcades were enclosed in curtains of beaver or sable fur. To assure practical results, the major motivation, sympathetic magic was again employed—there were machines for creating the semblance of a storm: thunder, lightning, rain—all calculated to induce the outer heavens to send the real storm which would replenish the needy earth.

As the Throne of Chosroes faced a lake, so also, in several major

reports, the Grail Temple is related to a body of water. In the earliest written account of Chrétien de Troyes (1180-90) the Grail Castle stands beside a river. In Wolfram von Eschenbach's poem and in the Peredur story in the Welsh *White Book of Rhydderch* (1322)⁵ it is beside a lake. The Grail Temple, in Albrecht's poem, is set in the midst of an artificial sea. These are European echoes of the Iranian insistence on water as an indispensable element in the fertility cult, and the ultimate purpose of fertility ceremonies.

Other coincidences, though secondary, are still significant in the whole complex. In the Grail Temple, according to Albrecht, were used asbestos, associated with heat, and elitropia, associated with water and rain, suggestive of the main function of the Chosroes pavillion which was to control the heat of the sun and water from rain in order to promote life. Again, in the *White Book of Rhydderch*, Peredur makes a double visit to the Grail Castle, in the first emerging from a forest and finding a lake before the Castle, in the second approaching across a meadow. On another visit, later, he comes to the Castle by following a river through a valley. In this connection it is of some interest that the approach to the Takht from the south passes through a grove of trees, arriving at the lake where once stood the ceremonial pavillion; that from the north comes across a meadow, while the approach from the west (as well as the south) follows a stream up a valley. The Takht is approachable from only these three sides; the Grail Temple had doors only on these three sides.

One cultic parallel is particularly striking. The Grail Temple or Castle was the goal of a long and difficult journey which might be undertaken only by men of noble blood. And each Sasanian King was in honor bound to start, on the very day after his coronation at Ctesiphon, the long, arduous pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Shiz, entirely on foot, a tough journey of 400 miles which might have taxed any of King Arthur's knights.

A hint of Iranian origins may also be contained in Albrecht's account where he tells of windmills forcing air through pipes down under the buildings (to make the fish and other monsters in the artificial sea move). Windmills were an invention of East Iran; and

5. A collection of Welsh bardic tales written down in 1322: cf. Peredur Son of Efwarg, G. and T. Jones, Trans., *The Mabinogion*. Everyman, London, 1957, pp. 190-1,226.

the device by which air is forced down through pipes into the basement—the *Bad-gir*—is characteristic of Iran.

But the thesis that there is a certain relation between the throne of Chosroes and the Temple of the Grail does not rest on literary evidence alone. In 1937 an expedition of the Asia Institute (then the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology) reached Takht-i-Suleiman, the present name for the ancient Shiz,⁶ and found there substantial factual evidence of a correspondence of the site with Albrecht's description. Here was the mountain, a dome-like extinct volcano dramatically set apart from the surrounding terrain, with a plateau-like top, and it was ringed by a powerful, still-standing stone wall (40 feet high and 10 feet thick, built by the Parthians in the second century B.C.); here were remains of important buildings—Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic—testifying to the historic rôle of the site; here was a crystal lake in the center, and here also the flattened, smoothed-off area such as Albrecht described, and even more astonishing, a gleaming, crust-like deposit made by the mineral waters of the lake, which, particularly around the shores where it is more exposed, has taken on the appearance of onyx, with striations of white, buff, brown and other tints. These look sufficiently like onyx to justify Albrecht's assertions that the Grail Temple stood on a bed of onyx, which formed the substance of the mountain—a claim to some critics so fantastic as to deprive his other statements of credibility.

Moreover, Albrecht's remark that want was banished from the precincts of the Temple would be justified here at the Takht, for two unfailing streams pour out of the lake, miraculously conferring fertility, abundant and constant, on the green surrounding land.

Even more conclusive evidence of a dependent relation between Albrecht's Grail Temple and the Takht-i-Taqdis is furnished by an engraved bronze salver, in the Berlin Museum, which is either very late Sasanian or early post-Sasanian.⁷ For this shows in elevation a

6. Reported in *Bulletin of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Dec. 1937: articles by Pope, Crane, Wilber, Ackerman, pp. 71-109; 28 illustrations.

7. Published by Strzygowski (1917, 1930), Sarre (1931), Pope (1932, 1938), Ackerman (1937, 1938), Reuther (1938), Ringbom (1951). For convenient illustrations see *Art Bulletin*, XV (1933), p. 10; *Bulletin American Institute Persian Art*, op. cit., p. 107; Survey of Persian Art, Vol I, pp. 555-6; Vol. III, p. 2702; Vol. IV, pl. 1381.

domed palace which is elaborately decorated with symbols of fertility—trees, great blossoms, jars of the living water.

This building, depicted by the line engraving in the center of the salver, has been identified, by an intricate complex of internal evidence paralleling the literary records, as the Takht-i-Taqdis. A striking confirmation is that the rollers on which, according to Persian accounts, the building was set, are clearly shown in the drawing on the salver, a most unusual kind of foundation.

The building itself was interpreted by Strzygowski as an emblematic representation of the Holy Grail to which, when he reaffirmed it at the 2nd International Congress for Persian Art (London, 1931), Professor Sarre replied with great vigor that not one line of evidence had been produced—only affirmations. But Strzygowski's guess was apparently correct, for with Professor Wolf's publication of the more accurate Albrecht manuscript the two were virtually conclusively linked. For on the salver the central building is surrounded by twenty-two arched panels, each framing a decorative tree; and in the revised version of the Albrecht poem the rotunda of the Grail Temple is surrounded by twenty-two arcaded chapels, each decorated with an ornamental tree. The correspondence is the more impressive because the division of a circular area into twenty-two equal units is practically unprecedented in the decorative arts, and is difficult to achieve with ordinary craft methods.

On the salver the twenty-two arches represent, in a non-naturalistic, decoratively translated "perspective," an arcaded wall that evidently enclosed the Paradise Garden in which the Sasanian Temple would, in accordance with deeply rooted Iranian custom, have been set. Actually, the Temple could not have been encircled by merely twenty-two arches—they would have to have been of impossible heights and would have left conspicuous traces which the Institute's expedition would have seen. The number must be taken as "shorthand" for 220—just as the terminal zero is often dropped in writing Muslim dates, especially on works of art—it being obviously impossible to depict the full number on the salver. When 22 is thus understood as 220, the figure assumes a natural symbolic character quite lacking in 22, for 220 is divisible by four, important both in the practical design and symbolically because of the overshadowing concepts of

the Four Quarters and the Four Seasons; and when divided by four it gives 55, also a "good" symbolic number, as five refers to the Four Quarters and the Center. Such a magnificent wall of arches round the Temple and its garden would justify the name: "The Throne of Arches"—Takht-i-Taqdis.

Albrecht, or some lost predecessor's work from which he was borrowing, had with western literal-mindedness interpreted the decorative convention of flattening out a perspective as a ground plan, thus giving rise to the plan of radial chapels, and also the concept of the Grail Temple as circular.

Moreover, Albrecht, or his source, also interpreted the representation on the salver literally in respect of another important feature of the Grail Temple. For the engraving of the Takht-i-Taqdis in the center of the salver is miniature in scale in relation to the surrounding arcade; and Albrecht tells us that in the very center of the Grail Temple was a miniature replica of the temple itself, in which the Grail was deposited.

Again, the fact that it was presented on a *salver* would link the Takht with the Grail. For "grail," in Old French "*graal*," meant originally "salver"; and a great salver, ceremoniously borne, was a major feature, usually the chief object, in the solemn procession within the Grail Castle which is the climax of the story. This salver bore a major object of the cult, either exposed but unexplained—like the severed head shown to Peredur; or concealed, and indicated as the Secret Object itself.

In Albrecht's account is another and almost more significant episode relevant to the fact that the Temple is illustrated on a salver; for according to him, the Grail was sent to India and as a result a replica of the Grail Temple was built there. This would be possible only if the Grail carried with it a representation of the Temple; and the big round bronze ray is a "graal" in the old literal sense of "salver" which does carry a detailed illustration of the Takht and its surrounding twenty-two arches which are echoed in Albrecht's Grail Temple.

It seems certain, then, that Albrecht, or his source, had seen an engraved salver like, or very similar to, the one in Berlin and knew that the building there represented was the Takht-i-Taqdis, so that he could supplement the illustration with other details that were

known either from word-of-mouth tradition or in written reports—or the two combined.

But by what routes could this strange far-away building have become known to Europe and so deeply impressed Europeans? The problem is the more puzzling since the Takht-i-Taqdis was destroyed by Heraclius in 628, hardly twenty-five years after it was begun. The supreme and dramatic, particularly if it expresses the national genius and faith of a great people, travels far across many frontiers by virtue of its own momentum. In the case of the Throne of Chosroes, however, there were several ways in which it could reach the eager, wonder-loving mind of early mediaeval Europe. Some 10,000 returning officers and men of Heraclius' army must have been deeply impressed by the dazzling and quite unparalleled splendor of the Throne pavillion, which they helped to dismantle; an impression re-enforced by the strange storm-working machinery and the horrendous statue of Chosroes, arrogantly elevated high in the dome representing the vault of Heaven; by the magic of the constant lake, and, of course, as soldiers they must have been impressed by the site, its formidable wall, and the memory of the tragic defeat there of Marc Anthony. Returning, they would have had much to tell. Byzantine historians recognized the importance of Heraclius' triumph and reported it at some length in accounts now largely lost.⁸

There were, moreover, other and continuous avenues of communication. Persian Sasanian influences spread up through Christian Armenia, where there are many five-domed churches resembling the drawing on the salver, and round churches following the alternate interpretation; and Armenia was always in touch with the Christian West. In the eighth century there were Byzantine envoys at the Courts of the Caliphs of Baghdad where Sasanian memories were still very much alive, and Harun ar-Rashid was in touch with Charlemagne. Persia likewise had contacts with Egypt, and Egypt with Europe. The Irish missions to Egypt in the tenth century would have been a likely contact.

But far more important than these secondary contacts, and of

8. Theophanos (8th c.); Nicephoros (8th c.); Georgios Monachos (9th c.); Ado of Vienne (9th c.); Gorgious Cedrenous (11th c.), using earlier material; Tzetes (12th c.).

poignant interest to the Christians of Europe, was the harrowing story which everybody knew of Chosroes' capture of Jerusalem in 614 and his seizure of the supreme Christian relic, the Cross itself, which the Sasanian monarch carried off to the sanctuary at Shiz. For the whole of devout Christianity this was a heart-breaking tragedy—never to be forgotten until it was retrieved, and again never to be forgotten when it was retrieved. And retrieved it was, when Heraclius took Shiz, destroyed the Takht and, in 629, carried the Cross back to Jerusalem in triumph and re-dedication. Mediaeval Europe, enveloping in its romantic devotion a great medley of traditions, most of them at least ultimately Oriental in origin, could hardly have failed to have absorbed the image and the feeling of the Takht-i-Taqdis, along with its legendary-repute.

Mediaeval Europe was, indeed, quite aware of the Asian world. Long before the Crusades, pilgrims sought the Holy land in such crowds that traffic out of Marseilles had to be officially regulated and each pilgrim, on boarding a vessel, was required to show his return ticket. Again, did not Abbott Suger say, "I love to talk with those who have been to the East and Jerusalem to see if their ways are not better than ours"? Everybody "knew" about a strange Christian king, Prester John, his fabulous palace and wide domains in Central Asia, or alternatively as King of Armenia and Egypt. Actually, Europe, partly because of the episode of the Cross, was well aware of the Palace of Chosroes, and it appears both in literature and the arts. German texts beginning as early as 1125 describe the Throne of Chosroes, with its jewelled dome, and the *Sächsischen Weltchronik* gives a miniature showing Chosroes seated on his throne high in the vault of Heaven. Other mediaeval accounts describe the mechanism for imitating rain; others ascribe to Chosroes fantastic powers—even to having covered his entire land with a heavenly vault. A Flemish tapestry, now in Saragossa Cathedral, made as late as about 1480, depicts Heraclius destroying the Throne of Chosroes.

The source or explanation for some of our formative and most persistent ideas cannot be found in our own history because they were engendered in the East before there was any Western culture, and they are far from obvious. Much research is needed; we must, of

course, have far more facts about these remote sources.

But successful research into the cultural backgrounds of the Ancient Orient requires not merely more material and documentary "facts," but also, and quite urgently, a sympathetic understanding of presuppositions and attitudes fundamental in West Asian culture, wholly different from either the scientific or the common-sense assumptions of the Western world. We have persistently questioned the concepts and categories behind Asian cultures, but it has been in terms of those familiar to us. Consequently, the mentalities reflected in Asian cultural history often remain stubbornly opaque, they resist our insights and will continue to do so except when investigated in their own terms. More "facts" we certainly need, but uninterpreted "facts" are scarcely facts at all, and such "facts" seen against a Western, rather than an Eastern background are unreliable, if not downright deceptive. The myths and postulates of ancient Oriental culture are involved in a remote and apparently foggy symbolism, often deeply connected with mystery cults and secret initiation rites, almost always involved deeply in complex religious systems and in many cases interwoven with astronomical concepts involving preconceptions and even images quite alien to both our experience and our information. Moreover, many centuries of cross-fertilization have often obscured the original strains, or crystallized them in formal simulacra or enmeshed them in references the original meanings of which have gone astray. Nonetheless, strange and irrational as ancient Asian cultural backgrounds may repeatedly seem, they have been evolved through profound and significant human experiences and this has given them initiating power as well as persistence.

If we try, however, to stretch these notions, images and the mythic complexes which are their matrix on the procrustean bed of Western rationalism, they will be deformed past recognition or evaluation, and quite devitalized, while under sympathetic exploration they can become very revealing and suggestive.

What is needed is still more and more open-minded and imaginatively sympathetic research into the genesis and development of the mythic web which is the backdrop of all Asian culture, further efforts to clarify and formulate the figures, types, their action-patterns and typical interrelations, a more critical—which also means a more open-

mind—assessment of their rôle in cultural developments such as we have already had, to a considerable extent, in systematic surveys of ancient Egypt and in studies of early Mesopotamia.

The part that the Orient played in the Grail legends and cult, the influence of this whole complex on European art and architecture, and specifically in this case the part played by that extraordinary building, the Takha-i-Taqdis so ably studied by Ringbom, is but one of many instances of the stream of constructive influences that have issued from the Ancient East since before the dawn of Western civilization, a civilization which cannot be wholly or deeply understood without repeated references and new insights into Oriental sources.

Europe found her religious faiths—Greek, Roman or Northern—intellectually, morally and emotionally insufficient and gradually replaced them with Christianity, an Oriental religion, after having earlier experimented with two other Eastern religions—Mithraism and Manichaeism. Rome, at the end, was pretty thoroughly orientalized. The incessant wars of Rome and Byzantium with Persia involved much cultural interchange. It was from the Orient that Europe learned many of the refinements of life: manners, costume, music. Troubadours and Minnesingers, their songs fashioned on Oriental models, introduced chivalry and heraldry, and profoundly influenced European literature. Europe depended largely on Arabic sources for knowledge of the Classics, and owed deep debts to the Near East in various sciences: medicine, astronomy, mathematics, navigation. Persia and Armenia made important contributions to the beginnings of Gothic architecture, and the 80,000 Persian coins of the tenth century alone found in Scandinavia witness the lively commerce between these regions. The flow of cultural contributions from the East was considerably augmented by the Crusades, and the extravagant enthusiasm of the eighteenth century for the Arabian Nights tales is a late example of Europe's continuing thirst for the release and stimulation that Oriental imagination and emotion provided.

Hence it should not be at all surprising that the Takht-i-Taqdis, the fabulous temple that Chosroes II built on a strange mountain-top in northwest Persia, should have been the model for the Temple of the Grail, as the complex interlocking evidence from independent sources now shows. In fact, that various legends surrounding the Grail

came into Europe from the Orient can now be substantiated by a mass of detailed evidence. Dr. Phyllis Ackerman, who has contributed valuable ideas to this article, is bringing to conclusion several years of intensive research on certain Oriental sources of Grail mythology, the ways and reasons for the transformations of certain Oriental myths, more or less disguised, that reappear by traceable routes in the Grail cycle.

It is urgently to be hoped that there can be arranged a thoroughly equipped scientific expedition to the site of the Takht-i-Taqdis, to see if any traces whatever remain of the fabulous temple of Chosroes. Results of both investigations will be eagerly awaited by scholars of many countries.

The Sail

Lermontov's *Parus* translated by Guy Daniels

A lone sail makes a patch of whiteness
Against the blue mist on the sea.
What is he seeking in far places?
What has he put behind, to flee?

The waves leap up, the wind is whistling,
The mast is laboring, and creaks.
It isn't happiness he flees from,
Alas! Not happiness he seeks.

Below, the sparkling bright blue water;
Above, the sun, golden and round.
But he, rebellious, seeks the tempest,
As though in tempests peace were found!

Ulysses

JOHN CIARDI

At the last mountain I stood to remember the sea
and it was not the sea of my remembering
but something from an augur's madness:
sheep guts, bird guts, ox guts, smoking
in a hot eye. Was this my life? Dull red,
dull green, blood black, the coils still writhing
the last of the living thing, a carnage
steaming into the smoke of a sick dawn.

I had planted the car at the crossroads, there in the goat dust
where the oaf waited chewing a stalk of garlic.
"Stranger," he said, "what have you on your shoulder?"
"A world," I said, and made a hole for it,
watched by the oaf and his goats. I gave him money
for the fattest goat and asked to be alone,
and he would not leave me. I gave him money again
for a peace-parting, and he would not go.
"Stranger," I said, "I have sailed to all lands,
killed in all lands, and come home poor. I think
blood buys nothing, and I think it buys
all that's bought. Leave me this goat and go."
Why should I want his blood on me? The goat
stared at me like an old man, and the oaf
sat chewing garlic. This much had been commanded.
Was the rest commanded, too? Was it my life
or the god's laughter foresaw me?

I prayed in anger:
"O coupling gods, if from your lecheries
among the bloods of man a prayer may move you
to spare one life, call off this last sad dog
you have set on me. Does Heaven need such meat?"
The heavens lurched on unheeding. The fool stayed;
would not be scared off, and would not be whipped off.

Then he raised his staff against me.

Was it my life
or the gods' laughter answered? I hacked his sidearm
across the middle: almost a stunt for practice—
dead level, no body weight to it, all in the shoulder
and wrist, and not three feet to the whole swing.
But it halved him like a melon; a chop
the ships would have sung for a century!
—But there were no ships, and the oar was planted unknown
in a country of garlic and goat turds,
and what lay fallen was rags and bones.

"Take him, then!" I cried.
"Who else could stomach such a dusty tripe?"
I made the pyre with the planted oar at its center,
and as it flamed I raised the libation cup,
but mouthed the wine and spat it at the blaze.
The fire roared up like Etna. "At your pleasure,"
I shouted back and threw the dead clown in,
first one piece, then the other. The horns of the flame
raped him whole and blew for more. The goats
stood watching, huddled like old crazy men
in a chorus round the fire, and one by one
I slit their throats and threw them to their master.
I say those goats were mad: they waited there
as if the fire were Medusa: the blood of the dead
ran down the legs of the living and they did not move,
not even to turn their heads. And in the center
the flame went blood mad in a shaft to heaven.

It was dark when I turned away. I lost my road
and slept that night in a grove. When I awoke
I found a shrine to Apollo, a marble peace
leaned on by cypresses, but across his belly
a crack grinned hip to hip, and the right hand
lay palm-up in the dust. On the road back
I came on many such, but that was the first

of the cracked gods and the dusty altars.

I returned to the sea, and at the last mountain
 I stood to remember, and the memory
 could not live in the fact. I had grown old
 in the wrong world. Penelope wove for nothing
 her fabric and delay. I could not return.
 I was woven to my dead men. In the dust
 of the dead shore by the dead sea I lay down
 and named their names who had matched lives with me,
 and won. And they were all I loved.

Poem

E. E. CUMMINGS

to stand(alone)in some

autumnal afternoon:
 breathing a fatal
 stillness;while

enormous this how

patient creature(who's
 never by never robbed of
 day)puts always on by always

dream,is to

taste
 not(beyond
 death and

life)imaginable mysteries

Six Poems by Gabriela Mistral

Translated from the Spanish by Langston Hughes

Larks

They came down in a patch of wheat,
and, as we drew near,
the flock flew away
and left the startled field quite empty.

In the thicket they look like fire;
when they rise, like silver darting.
And they go by even before they go,
cutting through your wonder.

Our poor eyes, knowing only
that the whole flock has gone,
cry, "Larks!" to those who rise,
and are lost, and sing.

In the sorely wounded air
they leave us full of yearning,
with a wonder and a quiver
in body and in soul . . .

Larks, son! Above us sweep
the larks across the plain!

Fear

I do not want them to turn
my child into a swallow;
she might fly away into the sky
and never come down again to my doormat;
or nest in the eaves where my hands
can not comb her hair.
I do not want them to turn
my child into a swallow.

I do not want them to make
my child into a princess.
In tiny golden slippers how could
she play in the field?
And when night came no longer
would she lie by my side.
I do not want them to make
my child into a princess.

And I would like even less
that one day they crown her queen.
They would raise her to a throne
where my feet could not climb.
I could not rock her to sleep
when night time came.
I do not want them to make
my child into a queen.

Song of the Fisherfolk

Little daughter of fisherfolk
who has a way with wind and waves,
may you sleep covered with sea shells,
may you sleep entangled in nets.

Sleep atop the dune that lifts you high,
listening to the sea-nurse who,
ever wilder, rocks you the more.

Nets that will not let me keep you
fill my lap,
for should I break their knots
I might break your luck.

Sleep better now than you
could in your own cradle,
mouth full of sand
dreams full of fish.

Two fish at your knees,
one with head and breast of silver
leaping and jumping,
the other aglow . . .

Song

A woman is singing in the valley. The shadows falling blot her out, but her song spreads over the fields.

Her heart is broken, like the jar she let down this afternoon among the pebbles in the brook. As she sings, the hidden wound sharpens on the thread of her song, and becomes thin and hard. Her voice in modulation dampens with blood.

In the fields the other voices die with the dying day, and a moment ago the song of the last slow-poke bird stopped. But her deathless heart, alive with grief, gathers all the silent voices into her voice, sharp now, yet very sweet.

Does she sing for a husband who looks at her silently in the dusk, or for a child whom her song caresses? Or does she sing for her own heart, more helpless than a babe at nightfall?

Night grows maternal before this song that goes to meet it; the stars, with a sweetness that is human, are beginning to come out; the sky full of stars becomes human and understands the sorrows of this world.

Her song as pure as water filled with light cleanses the plain, and it rinses the ignoble air of day in which men hate. From the throat of the woman who keeps on singing, day rises nobly evaporating toward the stars.

Midnight

Delicate the midnight.
I hear the knots of the rosebush:
sap pushing upward rising to the rose.

I hear
the burning rays
of the Bengal tiger:
they do not let him sleep.

I hear
the couplet of fat
as it grows in the night
like a dune.

I hear
my mother sleeping
with two breaths.
(At the age of five
I sleep within her).

I hear Roldan
descend and carry me
like a father
blind with blind foam.

Then I hear nothing
except that I am falling
on the walls of Arles
bathed in sunshine . . .

Prayer

Lord, you know with what frenzy fine
Your help for strangers I have often sought.
Now I come to plead for one who was mine,
honeycomb of my mouth, spring of my drought,

Lime of my bones, sweet reason to be,
birdsong at my ear, a belt my waist to trim.
I have sought help for others who meant nothing to me.
Do not turn Your head now when I plead for him.

I tell You he was good, and I say
his heart like a flower in his breast did sing,
gentle of nature, frank as the light of day,
bursting with miracles as in the Spring.

Unworthy of my pleas is he, You sternly say,
since no sign of prayer crossed his fevered face
and one day, with no nod from You, he went away,
shattering his temples like a fragile vase.

But I tell you, Lord, I once caressed
his gentle and tormented heart—
as a lily might his brow have pressed—
and found it silky as a bud when petals part.

You say he was cruel? You forget I loved him ever.
He knew my wounded flesh was his to shatter.
Now the waters of my gladness he disturbs forever?
I loved him! You know, I loved him—so that does not matter.

To love (as You well understand) is a bitter task—
eyelids wet with tears may be,
kisses in prickly tresses may bask,
beneath them guarding eyes of ecstasy.

To welcome the chill of iron one may choose
when loving flesh its thrust encloses.
And the Cross (You recall, Oh, King of the Jews)
may be gently borne like a sheaf of roses.

So here I am, Lord, my head in the dust,
pleading with You through a dusk unending,
through all the dusks that bear I must
if You should prove unbending.

I shall wear down your ears with prayers and with cries,
licking the hem of your garment like a dog full of fears—
never to avoid me anymore Your eyes,
or your feet escape the hot rain of my tears.

Grant him forgiveness at last! Then all winds will blow
rich with a hundred vials of perfume,
all waters will sparkle, all cobblestones glow,
and the wilderness burst into bloom.

From the eyes of wild beasts gentle tears will flow,
and the mountains You forged of stone will understand
and weep through their white eyelids of snow:
the whole earth will learn of forgiveness at Your hand.

Sermons in Stones

ROBERT HILLYER

I like old epitaphs that bear a warning
Not of abstractions, such as man's perdition,
But—like the three I copied down this morning—
Specific as to cause and admonition:

I

You could not say poor Rufus Martin sinned;
I guess he was a fool and not a knave.
He never reefed however hard the wind—
Do likewise, Friend, and join him in the grave.

II

Ann Marcey was a continental liar,
No one in town believed her for a minute;
And when she yelled her bedroom was on fire,
We chuckled. But it was. And she was in it.

III

Lemuel Jones believed the Lord was coming,
Just as the Reverend Miller told his people.
So to be first on hand when things got humming
He climbed up then fell down the Baptist steeple.

With warnings such as these before our eyes
We might improve our chances of survival,
Except that few can reef now, all tell lies,
And almost none await the Lord's arrival.

At the Garden Club

ROBERT HILLYER

No wonder poor Miss Rustle has hay fever;
Her long proboscis, like a bumble bee's,
Probes in the floral sets that might receive a
Prize but for her sniffing and her sneeze.
She wrecks each delicately poised arrangement
Where every petal, every stamen, counts,
While in her wake a wave of cold estrangement
Between her and her fellow members mounts.

Is it coincidental that her tangles
Of weeds and zinnias take the first award,
Adding another to the clanking bangles
Upon her chest as flat as any board?
Near-sighted, vague, attenuated creature,
She can't expect congratulations, can she?
Who wrecked all competition with that feature
That also wrecks her face, the nosy banshee!

Unconscious of the rising tide of fury,
Miss Rustle, with an absent-minded smile,
First thanks the members of the imported jury,
Then as before goes sniffing down the aisle,
Not dreaming, in her ecstasy of sweetness,
How some plan ragweed for their next design,
While Mrs. Lutz, as Heaven is her witness,
Will utilize the poison ivy vine.

Four Poems by Witter Bynner

Horsemanship

Blockade has come. It towers on my course.
All that I asked for was a likely horse
Upon whose wings to rear. But he is shy
Against those monstrous clouds, and so am I.
We back together. Suddenly I see
A charger riding high and none of me.

African Mask

I have a snout,
An ebony grin,
My lips reach out,
My head draws in.

But what I grow
Behind the mask
Be glad to know
Or do not ask.

The Bell

The bell rings once, as though a single toll:
Love, which rolled in, also away can roll.

The bell rings twice, the dirge is deep and whole:
Never again can death steal what it stole.

Three times it rings, and I can feel no anger
Against no meaning in its final clangor.

Toys

I need but look across the land
And a Creator be,
To hold a mountain in my hand
And wash it with a sea,

And then to make and set along
Countless papery people
With senses five and a sense of song
And senses of good and evil.

My fingers putter with them all,
With their gossamer or weight,
And I like to watch them cling to the ball,
Trying to gravitate.

My breath can help, but the trouble is
I have a frequent cough
So bad that when it hits their knees
People keep falling off.

I still can make new people but
The time will come one day
I shall be tired of the lot
And blow them all away.

The Unborn Child

DONALD HALL

The ticking heart within the side
Repeats but does not coincide.
The self-creating, double, blind,
Make one who is another kind,
The child who huddles at the breast
For food and warmth, for play and rest.

A tent of gifts we brought to bed,
Like Magi when we visited.
By this conjunction grew a cell
Which split and grew again to tell
Its separate line, uniquely new,
Determined in itself whereto.

Within the spinning embryo,
The seeded tumor starts to grow;
And in the branches of the brain
Madness begins, that will obtain;
The weight of pain on every limb
Augments until it crushes him.

He dies to have the touch that gives
From his own flesh, new flesh that lives.
The joint of us, by us will he
Appreciate mortality.
The gifts at end are death alone,
But the first deaths will be our own.

Harvest Time

DAVID CORNEL DEJONG

Jessie, I said, rise from
your bounty and come for
a walk along the ravine
in which we threw the dead
horses and solved ambitions
while strength is still upon us.

David, she said, let not your
heart be proudly troubled,
I can caress it and burn
a bright candle that you
may walk with face averted
from old accretions and ennui.

Even so we passed the ravine
and threw pebbles which tinkled
on pelvic arches on horses
and foundered on erstwhile
mercies and dreams, Jessie
with face turned toward heaven.

But our own children waiting
for our return screamed from
the door: Here they come
the spoilers of dreams. Where
lilacs once bloomed like blessings
and now stood nodding agreement.

Where Sorrow Hangs

CHARLES SHAW

Where sorrow hangs
in solitude
between the lover
and the loved,
time bows its head
in memory
of moonlit promises
unkept,

pointing the way
to other nights
beyond the moment
and the when
the heavens sang
in ecstasy
and no one heard
but you and I.

The Habit of Mother Birds

(After Leonardo)

ROY MARZ

When I bought the young lark and set it free,
I thought of myself as death. But the picklock mind
Whose end is liberty can find no end
Except in madness, picking an unlocked sky.

Now as the solid citizen on the edge
Of sharp dying, I hop to the point of life.
The mother would have dropped a henbane leaf
And thus quick freedom into the cage.

The Birthday

ROY MARZ

If I of now could have my birth again,
Knowing, with old feeling, the first pain,
The sweetness of the honeysuckle coming
Clean as the slap of my mid-aunt's careful hand,
I think that I could understand
(Midnight's humped punctuation straightening
Up to dawn's reply) how life is borne.

If bearing were single, all could be easily borne.
But turning to my mother's breast to learn
Nothing is single, neither the thirst nor well,
Need of sleep nor needy sleep coming on,
How could I go a way I have not gone
And bear a turning never meant to turn?

The single answer curves, hump goes to bone,
Only an ignorant beginning is straight;
And when, bending at midnight, I question dawn's
Single receiving of honeysuckle as sweet,
Mother as well, first day first of all,
My straight answer, taking my first turn,
Doubles into the echo of recall.

Comprehension

JOHN FANDEL

Once, toward the end of summer,
Green traveler in a wood,
I saw a yellow leaf;
It stopped me. Soft, I stood
And heard the summer murmur
Something slow as grief
In that brief yellow leaf:
Summer will never recover.
I listened in belief.
I thought I understood.
But then another murmur,
A softness of green leaves
Told my silence: *Summer*
Recovers as it grieves,
Recovers as it leaves.
I thought of summer, and
I think I understand.

The Unicorn

ETHAN AYER

EDITHA RENNEY was famous for being funny. She was one of those women—becoming fewer—who could beguile a whole roomful of people and make them believe anything. Tonight, at dinner, she had beguiled them, although not a whole roomful, into believing successively the *pot-de-chambre* story, the story about the edelweiss, the story about the time she was a supernumerary in a performance of *Tannhäuser* in Milan, and finally the story about the unicorn—about the old maid who had found a unicorn in her bedroom. She even offered to show them a picture of the unicorn—as proof, she said. If Editha had not been the one to tell the story, it would have been unpleasant. It was only tolerable because she chose to tell it. Editha could be ribald.

Tonight, at dinner, soup had led to entree, entree to salad, salad to dessert. And one story had led to another. The horn of the unicorn had led to the pearls around Editha's neck. Mother-of-pearl to pearl.

Lovely, lovely. Such size. So many. So well-matched. Really, Alice had forgotten how lovely they were.

"Oh, these pearls," said Editha Renney, throwing one Wagnerian leg over another. "They used to be mother's." Alice sighed enviously as Editha lifted a handful of them off her neck and ran them voluptuously through her fingers. "Father gave them to me after she died, you know."

Editha Renney's pearls were famous. She always wore them with black velvet evening dresses. Never otherwise. Indeed, in the evening, she never dressed otherwise. The rest of her figure was not quite as Wagnerian as her legs, and her face nowhere near. It was very handsome—which did not debar it from being Wagnerian, of course, except that it was comparatively thin. Along the neck and about the eyes appeared equivocal lines which might have been due to age, or might have been due to illness. Editha insisted they were due to dissipation.

"Oh, this whiskey," she might have said in the same voice. "It was my father's. He left it to me after he died, you know."

She had, in fact, said just this very thing to Alice over highballs once, and shocked her deeply. That had been last year when Alfred had come. Alfred was Alice's husband. He too had been shocked. Over after-dinner coffee now she smiled as she remembered.

Alice looked away from the pearls, and around the room. If it was a gesture to change the conversation, it was doomed because the room was certainly as beautiful as the pearls and, in its way, as big.

"Yes, Alice," said Editha, following her glance. "Mother left me the pearls and father left me the house, and both of them are just as false as they can be."

"Don't be silly," said Alice. "They are both lovely, and you know it. Why, the view from this window alone is an inheritance."

"Especially at night, and with the curtains drawn," said Editha negligently. "Do you want some more coffee, Alice? The coffee is mine. Brazilian. Nobody left it to me. I bought it myself."

Alice declined with a shake of her head.

"It would be wonderful," she said, "to have built this house, to have bought those pearls. So hopeful for the future. So ornamental for the present . . ."

"And so extravagant for the past," said Editha getting up. "I'm sure I will have to sell the pearls before the year is out. I'd sell the house too, if I thought anybody'd buy it."

"Why don't you live in Boston?" said Alice, getting up, too. "217 Beacon Street isn't the only house in the city."

"No," said Editha doubtfully.

"Why did you sell it?" the other woman said, moving off towards the others.

In the Renney living room it was easy to be seated around the same coffee tray as the others, and yet be a considerable distance from them. Editha moved somewhat heavily after Alice.

"I like the country," she said.

"The gay life," the other said over her shoulder. "There's nothing to keep you in the country now, you know."

"No," said Editha again, "except that I like it. Father always liked it. He always felt better down here—especially towards the end."

Editha took up a commanding position in front of the fire. The others all looked at her now—they had been listening ever since the pearls. There were six of them. Three of them belonged to Alice; two little girls and a boy. Editha would not allow them to call her aunt. The other three were friends of theirs, a girl called Anne Clarey, and two unidentified boys. Very polite.

"You used to like a gay time," said Alice, standing beside her.

The others did not look at Alice. Editha did not look at Alice. Alice was a very remote cousin, both geographically and genealogically. Editha was convinced her remoteness was her only virtue—or if there were others, tact was certainly not one of them.

Everyone looked at Editha but she said nothing.

"You should get married, Editha," Alice said next.

"If Alfred were here," Editha said after a perceptible pause, "he would tell me not."

"Alfred or no Alfred, you should have a man in your life," insisted the other. "Any man except Alfred, that is. I had too much trouble to catch him to let him go." She laughed. The two unidentified boys laughed dutifully.

"Oh men," said Editha with a truly operative shrug of her bare shoulders. It put men in the same class as pearls and whiskey.

"Your father, children," Alice said, scanning the group seated around the coffee table, "was once in love with cousin Editha."

No one said anything. Alice had not laughed this time, so no one laughed. Editha Renney took a cigarette from a box on the mantelpiece and put it in her mouth. One of the boys sprang up to light it for her. She looked at him over the fire of the match.

"You look just like your father, Alfred," she said at last. "Thank you."

It was impossible to tell whether she was thanking him for the light or for looking like his father. She might, with less ambiguity, have thanked him for looking like himself. Alfred Farnsworth was exceedingly good-looking with the sort of refinement of good-looks that sets people apart—even children, and he was little more than a child. Certainly much less than a young man. It is doubtful if she had ever noticed him before. Certainly tonight she appeared to have noticed him for the first time. That is, really noticed him.

Alice had begun talking again.

"When are you going to show us," she was saying. "You said you would at dinner, you know."

It was quite a little time before Editha could think what she meant.

"Alfred," she said at last, looking at him, "will you ring the bell?" She pointed. "Over there by the door."

Little Anne Clarey was right next to the door, but Editha liked to watch Alfred. He moved so quickly. He had been so quick with the light. On his way to sit down again, he brushed by Anne, knocking her chair a little. He apologized. She told him that she was through with her coffee anyway, and he took her cup and set it back on the tray. Some one made way for him, and gently the conversation began again. Curious, Editha thought, that he should have done anything clumsy. It was almost as if he had done it on purpose.

The conversation was becoming general again when a butler appeared and she bent over and whispered to him in so low a voice that everybody leaned forward to hear. This was secret. They saw the butler nod and leave. He was almost as quick as Alfred had been. Editha liked to be obeyed quickly, but she had always had a sort of fear of clumsiness. She herself was always on the verge, but like so many people who are aware of a danger, she more than saved herself. She had, for instance, most beautiful, graceful hands. These she used like an actress of the old school, and everything she touched, as a consequence, took on a glamour which in itself it did not have. She knew this, of course. Her father, at the end, had told her often how he had liked to watch her pour his medicine, or even fossick around in the medicine cabinet for his pills. It had been her main consolation for all the years she had been wedded to his illness.

When the butler reappeared, therefore, bearing a piece of tapestry stretched in a gilded frame, it immediately assumed an incredible beauty when she took it with her hands. Everyone got up and crowded around it. Alice. Alfred. Anne. Editha sat down with it across her knees—gingerly, for it was dusty, and the wire on the back seemed to have a way of curling about and getting in the way as if it were alive. The tapestry looked as if it had been cut out of a larger piece. The

foliage and a single bright red foot in the background were disproportionately large. The kneeling unicorn in the foreground, however, was too well posed and too graceful to make this matter very much. The unicorn appeared to be almost swooning. His head, with its single twisted horn, was cast back as if in adoration, or pain—for he was wounded—and his haunches were drawn out in a limp, ecstatic line along the poison green of the grass.

Editha held the tapestry in various lights, tilting it this way and that, a hand on either side, the fingers loosely curled around corresponding extravagancies of the frame.

"That's blood," she said finally, gesturing with her head.

"Where?" said Alfred, leaning nearer.

"There, on the foot," said Editha looking around at him, "all over the foot."

"From the unicorn?" Anne asked.

"From the wound," said Alice.

"Funny kind of a shoe for a man to wear," Alfred said, looking at Editha.

"It's a medieval shoe," said Alice.

"It's a lady's shoe," said Editha somewhat sharply, "as you can see if you look closely." Before Alice could say more, she began to tell them about the hunting of the unicorn, and they all forgot about the funny story she had told at dinner. They listened—even Alice, who had only wanted to look. First she told them how a unicorn would only come to a virgin—that had been the basis for the story about the old maid—and how when it had come, the virgin had to stroke its head with her hand until it knelt in front of her and put its head in her lap. And then, and only then, could it be approached.

"Approached?" Alfred said doubtfully.

"Killed," said Editha, and leaned the tapestry against the leg of her chair.

"But why should anyone want to kill it?" Alfred wanted to know.

Editha did not answer him. Instead she dusted her hands together. It was as if she refused to make herself responsible for an answer.

"For the horn, of course," said Alice loudly. Editha was beginning to wonder how Alice could possibly be Alfred's mother. It wasn't the looks. The looks were there right enough—although Alfred resembled

his father more than his mother—but there it was, just the same, she thought; she was Alfred's mother, and she didn't see how she could be.

Aloud she said, "Alice, let's choose up sides."

Sudden as this suggestion may have been, it did not seem to startle the woman too much. Nor the other cousins. The unidentified boys and Anne a little, perhaps. But even they knew that charades were a traditional part of these dinners. The ages ran from fifteen to thirty-five about, and such a disparity could only be dealt with in an audience, or in some violent sort of parlour-game.

Editha began with little Anne Clarey. Alice chose one of her little girls. Editha a boy. Alice a boy. Then Alice chose the other of her little girls. It was not her turn, but nobody bothered to remind her. Editha ended up with Alfred.

All went as it should in charades. That is, each side acted out, in front of the other, first the separate syllables of the words chosen, and then the whole word together. Neither side was remarkably imaginative, and it seemed as if the less imagination used, the more furniture needed to make up the deficiency. By the end of half an hour, anyway, the beautiful big living-room looked like a scene out of *The Rake's Progress*. There were cushions on the floor, several overturned chairs, and the Paisley coverlet, which ordinarily lay folded over an arm of the big couch, was draped in a very Hogarthian manner over a glass cabinet, while a barricade of books, which had left a large gap in a nearby book-case, had been built beyond the coffee-table to a height which made the butler step high when he came to take the coffee things away, and no less high when he came back again for the tapestry.

Editha Renney sanctioned all this disorder gladly. Yearly she had done so. Only a year ago she and her father had sanctioned it together. Ten years ago her father and mother had sanctioned it. She had merely played. This year, the portraits of both looked down into the room in eternal sanction. It was, after all, not destruction, only disorder. It was not clumsiness. It was all very definitely on purpose. It was all very good fun.

Not many words had been played, however, when Alice decided it was time to go home. Editha's team had just guessed the whole word when Alice began looking around.

"We must be going, children, we have a long way," she said, looking at Editha as if it were her fault that they had a long way.

"One more," said Editha. She did not address the cousins and their friends as "children." She did not think she could—especially the boys. Especially Alfred. She gathered her team together, and they went out into the hall to confer. It was a long conference, and it made the other team impatient—especially Alice, whose reasons, had her team known them, would have disqualified her forever as a captain.

They could hear Editha's stage whisper through the door.

"But the syllables," she was saying, "how can we do the syllables?" Then they could hear another whisper interrupt hers. It was Alfred's, although not even his mother could recognize it.

"Shut the door," one of her little girls shouted, "we can hear every word you say." Her mother shushed her. She wanted to hear, but Alfred shut the door. Violently. Her irritation mounted.

On the other side of the door, an argument was in progress. It had already gone full circle when Alfred finally said, "You can do the first syllable *Eunuch*, and the second, *Corn*."

"Eunuch?" said Editha laughing, "do you know what one is?"

"It's one of those men who sit cross-legged with turbans and drawn swords outside harems, isn't it?" said Alfred deferentially.

"Like in *Esquire*," said one of the unidentified boys.

"But you can't use the same letter twice," little Anne Clarey objected.

"You're not," said Alfred excitedly. "Eunuch ends in *h*. *Corn* begins with *c*."

"You know what I mean," said Anne sharply.

"Perhaps we'd better do some other word," suggested Editha.

"No," said Alfred, and looked at Editha. "I want to play the whole word."

Editha looked back at him.

"We will play it your way," she said at length. "We can't keep your mother waiting any longer. Go and get the Paisley shawl, and the poker!" Then she looked at Anne. "Anne," she said, "you can play the hunter."

Eventually Alice and her team saw the door open, Editha emerge wrapped up in a bed-sheet, arrange a few cushions and assume among

them, as nearly as possible, the conventional attitude of an odalisque in what she hoped was the manner of *Esquire*. The bed sheet made her look much more like the Venus of *Tannhäuser* than an odalisque, but she was doing her best. Somebody squealed in appreciation.

Next Alice and her team saw Alfred emerge, with the shawl wrapped about his head, and the poker grasped in one hand. Somebody clapped. He bowed and then sat down cross-legged at Editha's feet, the poker across his knees. That was the first syllable, Editha said, getting up with some difficulty from her improvised ottoman. The guessing was wild. Only Alice guessed correctly, and she took a long time, and made her guess with visible distaste.

She even failed to laugh at Alfred working his way down an imaginary ear of corn, over and over in violent pantomime. That was the second syllable he said. Objections about the *h* and the *c* rose around him again, but he was too anxious to get on to the whole word to pay any attention. His mother did not object, but neither did she guess. She waited.

Finally the door opened again. Editha came into the room, this time without the bed sheet, and sat down in one of the few chairs that had not been overturned. Then Alfred came in on all fours. Then Anne came in, and retrieving the poker from the floor where Alfred had left it after the first syllable, established herself behind Editha's chair and waited. Waited eagerly. Alfred appeared not to see her. He continued on all fours to Editha's feet. He fixed his eyes upon her as if he did indeed adore her. Anne and Alice looked at each other over his head. Over Editha's head. But Editha was looking at Alfred. Bending over him. Extending her hand to him. By all precedents this should be a ridiculous scene, she thought. She watched Alfred crouch at her feet, and she put her hand on his head with a gesture that made him immediately twice as handsome, and more like his father than ever, Editha thought. Perhaps that was why, when he leaned his head against Editha's knee, Alice looked away.

Caught in a brief tableau of remembrance, Editha even thought that perhaps Alice was embarrassed for her son. But Editha had not long for thoughts. Anne was creeping stealthily out from behind her chair. Stealthily raising the poker. Stealthily balancing it, so that the thrust that she finally aimed at Alfred made him almost forget to die.

Almost. But die he did, nevertheless, his head still against Editha's knee, and his body drawn out in a limp, ecstatic line along the rich pile of the Renney rug. Little Anne stood over the group in triumph, still holding the poker against Alfred's side. But she did not seem so little now.

"The whole word," she said, looking around, "as if you all didn't know."

"Unicorn," said one of the unidentified boys obediently.

"We must be going, children," Alice said, getting up. "We have a long way."

The tableau began to move then. Editha and Alfred got up. Anne put the poker back. The others got up. Everyone filed out into the hall. Alfred waited in the door for Anne.

"You nearly broke my rib," he said to her with a rather difficult laugh. "You're quite an actress."

"You're quite an actor yourself," Anne retorted.

"You forgot the horn," one of the little girls said to him.

"You're quite a drama critic," Alfred said.

"Come. Get your things, children," said Alice, heading for a large hall-chair, three parts invisible in overcoats. Any ordinary chair would have been completely invisible, but this was huge, baronial.

The hall also was baronial. Bigger even than the living-room, but much less beautiful. The tapestry of the unicorn looked very small on the landing of the stairs—only visible as a bright square against the oak panelling. Alfred had seen it there often, but this was the first time he had ever seen the pattern. Editha had shown him the pattern. His cousin Editha, with her own lovely hands.

"Come, get your things, Alfred," Alice said.

Without appearing deliberately to ignore his mother, Alfred began to wander up the stairs while the others were busy with their coats and their "goodbyes." He went up to the landing without hurry, and almost as if against his will. He went the way the real gallery-goer goes, not taking something in, but being taken in by something. And when the others were all out the door, Editha followed him. She moved somewhat heavily behind him.

"Alfred," she said, "the others have gone."

"They can wait," he said without looking around.

"What if they go off and leave you one day," Editha said. "What would you do then?"

"I'd stay," said Alfred, still looking at the tapestry. "I'd stay and stay."

Editha followed his glance. "Why do you look at it like that?" she said. "You'll burn holes in it."

He turned to look at her. "Why did you tell that story at dinner?" he said.

"What story?"

"The story about the unicorn," he answered.

"Didn't it amuse you?"

"Yes," he said doubtfully.

"Well, then, why do you ask?"

"I just wondered why you told it, that's all," he said, turning away again.

"What's the matter, Alfred?" she said, putting her hands on his shoulders and turning him towards her. "Did it shock you? It used to shock your father. I was sorry he couldn't come tonight; he loves to be shocked."

"I wasn't shocked," Alfred said. "I just wondered if you had ever seen one."

"Seen what?" Editha asked as if she didn't know. She could not now believe that she had never noticed Alfred before. She took her hands away from his shoulders.

"Seen what, Alfred?" she repeated.

"You know," he said, jerking his head towards the tapestry.

Editha began to think hard.

"Have you ever?" she finally said.

"How would I," he said, and then, after staring at the floor of the landing a long time he added, "I live in the city."

"Why are you blushing?" she asked him.

"I'm not." He almost whispered it.

"Well don't," she said, laughing. "Spare your blushes for somebody that needs them. I assure you that I have never found a unicorn in my bedroom yet. And I very much doubt if I ever will."

"You won't if you sell the house," he said.

"This isn't the only house in the country," Editha said. And then she turned to him in amazement.

"But you heard your mother and me talking, then," she said, "way at the other end of the room."

"You were not at the other end of the room. You were coming towards us."

"Do you remember that?" Editha was becoming more and more amazed.

"Yes. I remember everything."

"Do you remember that your mother is waiting for you?"

"Let her wait. She deserves to wait."

A series of blasts sounded faintly outside as he spoke.

"She's getting impatient," she said.

"She deserves to wait," he repeated.

"What a thing to say." She tried to sound indignant.

"You should have married father," he said.

"And you should go and hold little Annie Clarey's hand all the way home in the car for saying such a thing."

"Damn little Annie Clarey," he said.

She pushed him towards the edge of the landing, half playfully and half angrily.

"What a thing to say," she said again.

He did not answer, but turned instead, and took her hands firmly in his. She used his own strength against him to push him again. Then he dropped her hands and put his own around her waist to push her away. From then on the embrace just happened. At first she did not feel anything. Then she wondered if she should. If she could, it would make it easier to be kind. Then she began to pretend she did. She was a kind woman, and good at pretending. She even could pretend to herself. She felt his heart beat several times against her own, and yet she did not move. He was nothing but a child, she thought. Good God, could this be wickedness?

"Alfred," she said with a difficult laugh, "Alfred, child."

Vain enough her effort not to use the word!

"Pretend, pretend," she said to herself, "and forget. Pretend, and above all, forget."

She felt him draw away. She felt his hands drag for an instant

across her thighs, and a slight tickle on her cheek where his mouth had been. At least he had only kissed her on the cheek. She must not forget that.

"Alfred," she said, "your mother is waiting for you."

"No," said Alfred looking down into the hall, "she is coming for me."

She looked too, and saw Alice storming at the heavy glass door.

"Why couldn't your father come tonight, Alfred?" Editha asked.

"Meeting," came the answer almost in a whisper.

"Don't ever dare to have a meeting when I ask you to dinner, Alfred," she said.

"Will you want me again?" he said. "Will you want a child?"

"Until father died, I too was a child," she said. "And that was only a year ago."

Alice had come through the door by this time, they both saw.

"Alfred," Editha said suddenly, "can you move that chair over there under the unicorn?"

She pointed to another huge, baronial affair on the other side of the landing. It was heavy, but Alfred moved it without any trouble. With some trouble Editha climbed up onto it, and unhooked the tapestry.

"Here," she said, "reach up." The tapestry passed from hand to hand in plain sight of Alice who was now storming across the hall. Alfred gave Editha his hand to help her down. She stepped down carefully with one foot, but looking for Alice, instead of at what she was doing, she put her other foot down rather heavily on his. He winced, but said nothing, even though it was the second wound he had sustained in the same evening. By the time he had forgotten the pain, and she had apologized, they both saw that Alice was on the stairs.

"Take it," Editha said quickly to him. She raised her hand and pointed to the tapestry in his. "I want you to have it."

He turned to her. "Don't you want it?"

She shook her head. "I will always have the story," she said.

"But the proof," he said.

"Ah," she said. "Yes. The proof."

By the time she had lowered her hand again, Alice was upon them.

"Editha, you're not giving him that valuable tapestry, are you? Really it's too much, Alfred, you can't accept such a thing."

"I want him to have it, Alice," Editha said in a careful voice. "If the house is to go, as I hope to God it is, then somebody might as well have something out of it he wants."

Cajoling, pushing, and explaining all at once, Editha saw them down to the foot of the stairs, saw Alfred put on his coat, and saw him go out the door in front of his mother—ignoring her this time deliberately. Alice turned around to look at her.

"Goodbye, Editha," she said pleasantly enough, but Editha felt her eyes upon her neck. Envious eyes. And so Editha, standing at the foot of the magnificent Renney stairs, lifted a handful of the Renney pearls off her neck and ran them voluptuously through her fingers again. Again, and again—until she saw her Cousin Alice turn to go.

Enchanted Snow

MELVILLE CANE

Now as I stand
Before the window and attend
The sailing, flurrying flakes, the whitening land,
I seek again in vain some clue or key
To liberate the guarded mystery.

This much, no more, I know:
That science, fixed to finite laws,
Is helpless to unveil
The supervening cause.
And so, once more, I fail.

Now, in my eighth decade, no wiser now
Than the spellbound child
Who first beheld, beguiled,
Long seventy years ago,
Enchanted snow.

Kin

VAL MULKERN

TO KATE'S MIND the most curious thing about the whole day was the calmness of the child. She did her own packing in the appalling jungle of the flat, and she did it neatly, if not very fast. What Kate had actually been told to do was "get her things together for her, poor child, and don't let her bring over too much rubbish." But getting Celia's things together was something Celia was obviously much more capable of doing for herself. She knew, for instance, that her toys were with the detergents under the kitchen sink, that her shoes lived on top of the meat safe, and that her outdoor clothes were to be found under the stairs in a small brush-cupboard that also housed a vacuum-cleaner, a couple of mildewed watercolours, three canvases, a heap of summer frocks and a piece of sculpture.

So Kate merely sat and shuddered in the icy living-room whose open windows let in a sleety gale. Celia's trunk and suitcases were before her on the worn lavender carpet and she gazed up from them around the room. Four lime-green walls stared back at her, four green walls which flaunted more naked men and women and babies than Kate had ever seen before in her life. And, Holy Mother, the state of the sideboard! Pieces of contemporary pottery—"bits of chaney," was how Kate described them afterwards—were scattered here and there among open jampots, salt-drums, dozens of full ashtrays, a whiskey bottle, a bottle of red wine and piles of canned foodstuffs. What had the dead woman used the kitchen cupboards for? That's what she'd like to know. And, unable to resist finding out, she walked across the room and along the short narrow passage to the kitchenette. Celia was standing in the middle of a patch of red lino holding a rag doll thoughtfully by one leg, as if she had forgotten why she was there.

"Hurry up, child," said Kate kindly. "Have you your things nearly together?"

"Practically," said Celia. "You know, I came in here for something I particularly wanted to bring and I found this under the sink and I

forgot what I came for. Mrs. O'Keeffe made me this doll, you know, when I was five, and I think perhaps I'd better bring it because if she found it after we're gone she would almost certainly be offended."

"She that owns the house?" queried Kate briskly, opening a food cupboard and leaping back from the cascade of books which rushed down at her.

"Yes, she's our landlady, and not awfully good at doll-making really—I mean, look at the legs. I never liked this doll much even when I was five. My mother used to call it Turkey Legs."

"Devil the turkey I ever saw running around on legs like that."

"A *dead* turkey," Celia explained seriously, "a dead turkey hanging up in a butcher's window."

"That would be more like it," Kate said. "Still, it was very nice of the woman. Have you all the toys you want now? Your uncle said he'd maybe send the rest to the Vincent de Paul—if you don't mind."

"I don't mind, Kate. I've never cared for toys particularly."

"Well, aren't you the old-fashioned article! And what are you bringing any toys at all for, so?"

Celia licked all around her lips, carefully. "Apart from this, I'm just bringing the golliwog my father gave me."

Kate grew suddenly bustling, and despite herself her mouth tightened. "Right then, child, come on and we'll close the cases, so. But get your topcoat on first."

"My gabardine raincoat, I suppose you mean. All right."

"Wait a minute, Celia. It's perishing cold, with a wind that would skin you, so put on the thickest coat you have."

Celia licked her lips carefully again. "That's my gabardine raincoat. Neither my mother nor I ever bothered much about thick overcoats, you know. She used to laugh at women we'd meet out walking with two-ton fur coats and pinched-up frozen faces. *We* never felt the cold much, and we never got colds either because our windows were open summer and winter."

"Such nonsense!" said Kate, exasperated at last. "Well, at least you're coming to live in a comfortable home where the mistress will soon get ideas like that out of your head. Hurry up now, like a good girl, before the taxi has us robbed."

"Kate"—the small navy-clad child of nine suddenly looked her

years and no more, despite the assured masculine voice—"Kate, I don't remember much about my cousins—it's years since my mother had time to take me to their birthday parties. Are they—do you think they will mind very much having me to live with them?"

"Mind!" said Kate, scandalised. "I should *think* they won't mind. Your uncle I know is only too charmed to be having you, and Susan and Desmond could talk of nothing else today but yourself and how soon you'd be arriving. *Mind* having you, indeed! Hurry up now, like a good girl, and we'll fasten the bags."

But now that everything was ready, Celia's movements were slow, almost indolent. She drew on her navy school raincoat and fastened each button as if it were the last and she was in no hurry anyway. Her eyes strayed around the disorder of the room to the curtains lashing about in the wind and down to the loaded suitcases and the still-open trunk. Now that the moment of departure had come she felt unsure. She could not see herself outside the known world of this flat, and half believed that tonight she would draw as usual the worn red tweed curtains of her own room, plug in the fire which for as long as she could remember had made a sizzling noise, rip open the snap fasteners of her cushion-covers (worn red tweed like the curtains), and pile up the cushions as pillows on her divan. She seemed to hear again the sizzle of the faulty electric fire that was her hold on reality when she strained to keep awake, naming over and over again the thirty-two counties of Ireland, until her mother's step sounded along the passage. Sometimes her mother talked for a long time, and sometimes she just squatted on the rug by the fire and smoked, throwing ashes on the floor. "*Please*," Celia heard herself saying, and smiled, remembering, "*please*, I brought this ashtray in specially for you. Please use it."

"Ready," Kate said. "Now trot down like a good child and tell the taximan he can come for your bags."

"Kate"—Celia felt the urge to talk to this nice friendly woman because if they talked the taxi might go away—"Kate, when you're in bed and particularly want not to go asleep for a while, what do you do?"

"Stay awake. Now run like a lamb and tell him. We've no time to be throwing away."

"But Kate, what do you do? Just tell and then I'll go. Honest."

"When my head touches the pillow, child, I see no reason to stay awake any longer. Now off with you, Miss Celia, if you please."

"When I first went to school, Kate, the nuns tried to tell me that my name was Cecelia—like the saint, you know. But I said no. They said, well, why *weren't* you called Cecelia instead of a name that means nothing, like Celia, and I told them. Do you want to know what I told them, Kate?"

Kate knew when she was beaten. "All right, I do. But then you must go for the taximan."

"I told them my mother considered that a man called Ben Johnson wrote the most beautiful lyric in the English language when he wrote 'To Celia.' So she called me Celia. They didn't seem to think it a good enough reason. Do you see that picture above the bookshelves, Kate? She did that of me when I was three—three hours old. Wasn't I terrible?"

"Shocking. Like a skinned rabbit. But I'd say you had more sense then than you have now—will you trot, like a good girl, or do I have to carry you?"

"I'm going, Kate." Her navy beret with the black and white crest was on now, and one navy glove with a hole in the thumb. "I'll say goodbye to Mrs. O'Keeffe on the way. Wasn't it good I remembered her terrible doll—she'd hate to find it after me!"

All the way across the city in the taxi Celia kept chattering. She talked of Italy, where she had gone with her mother that summer, and of a strange fruit, like melon only sweeter, that they sold off barrows in the street, like ice cream here, she explained. It was called anguria. She talked of school, and of a poet called Michael who used to visit the flat often and who wouldn't eat anything at night only rice smothered in butter and how expensive butter was. She asked questions about her cousins, and then grew silent. They were almost in the snug south Dublin suburb by now, and she sat up very straight and watchful by the window.

Mrs. Sheridan had thought it settled that the child would not go to her mother's funeral. There was, after all, no need for it. But when Kate told her the following day that Celia had asked leave to press

her gabardine for the funeral and had asked her if there was any navy wool in the house, please, so that she could mend her glove, it appeared that some decision would have to be made about it.

"You'd better send her to me at once, Kate. This child looks like having a mind of her own."

"That she has, ma'am, but a more perfect little lady you wouldn't find in a day's walk, all the same. The politeness of her, and the heart in her at a time like this. If you were to see her yesterday, ma'am, and she doing the packing as well as you'd do it yourself, and she knowing where everything was—"

"Why on earth *wouldn't* she know where everything was, Kate—wasn't she in her own home?"

"Yes, but ma'am, if you were to see the place—. Salt drums in the dining room and books in the kitchen and her toys under the sink and full ashtrays all over the place and every window in the flat open, and the *cold* of it—. And those chanies and whiskey bottles on the side-board, and green walls—*green* walls, ma'am—and they plastered with pictures of men and women and babies in their pelt—not a stitch on them, saving your presence, ma'am—"

"That will be quite enough, Kate. You'd better send Celia to me at once. By the way, in the fuss of getting her unpacked last night and settled in her room, I forgot to ask you was there any change from the taxi."

"There was a shilling, ma'am."

"Will you put it in the Toby Jug when you go down, please, Kate?"

"It was safe in the Toby Jug five minutes after I coming in yesterday, ma'am." Kate sounded a trifle grim.

"Very good. Tell the child to be quick, will you?"

Celia was indeed quick. She stepped briskly into the big warm crimson drawing-room a few seconds later, and glanced smiling from her aunt-in-law to the fire and back again.

"It's so *warm* in this house," she sighed, noticing that the tall windows showing a wintry garden were sealed against the wind. Then she said politely: "Lovely, of course, in winter."

"Come and sit by the fire, Celia," Mrs. Sheridan said, and something in her voice made the child hesitate and lick her lips carefully

all around before obeying. "I understand you want to come with us to the funeral tomorrow, although I don't remember your asking."

Genuine astonishment filled Celia's eyes. "Asking?" she repeated, in the tone of somebody trying hard to understand. "But I'm going, you know." Even Mrs. Sheridan couldn't succeed in detecting any impertinence in either voice or face. The child was stating a fact about which to her there had never been any doubt.

"Celia, in this house Susan and Desmond are not accustomed to tell us they intend doing things. They are accustomed to ask our permission. Since we have invited you to become one of the family, for the time being we expect you to do the same."

Mrs. Sheridan observed with some satisfaction that the small navy-clad child seemed to shrink further in her too-large jumper. Her head dropped for a moment but lifted almost immediately. She slowly let the tip of her tongue travel over her lips.

"I must ask you to forgive me, Aunt Eileen. I didn't think. Please, may I go to my mother's funeral tomorrow?" The odd masculine voice was full of respect.

"I must discuss it with your uncle when he comes home, Celia. I dare say if you are so set on going, we'll allow you. But you can take my word for it, it's not *necessary*. You're only nine, after all."

"But please, I'm old enough to know what's happened and I'm not sick or anything. And my mother would have gone to *my* funeral." Celia brought this out seriously, urgently, the corner-stone of her argument. Her face was white with anxiety.

"There's no need to be silly, Celia. As I said, I dare say we'll allow you. How are you liking your room?"

"Very well, thank you." Celia swallowed, squeezing a smile. "It's a lovely room, and there are so many drawers for things, and shelves. You couldn't be untidy in a room like that."

"I certainly hope you won't try, Celia. However, I asked you because I noticed you didn't spend much time there today. You may always read in your own room whenever you wish, you know; in fact it would be a very good idea. Susan and Desmond would only disturb you up in the nursery."

"They're awfully sweet," Celia said confidentially, the first real smile since she had come breaking from her eyes. "They—they're mad

to know all about the places abroad I've been to, and most of this afternoon we talked about Spain. Susan wanted to know if the water that came out of taps tasted different in Spain. I'm afraid I couldn't remember if it did. Susan didn't understand how anyone could have such a bad memory."

Mrs. Sheridan did not smile. "Susan and Desmond are rather a lot younger than you, Celia. I'm afraid they'll bore you if you spend too much time in the nursery."

"Oh no! You've no idea how I love talking to small children. They haven't learned yet to cover over what they're thinking, and so you have everything just as they think it." Celia, who had come nearer to real animation just then than at any time since her arrival (except with the children) suddenly clouded over again. Mrs. Sheridan's handsome cold eyes unnerved her, and the cold lip-smile. "I must go, if you don't mind, to mend my glove."

"You'll find some navy blue wool in Kate's basket down in the kitchen. You could mend your glove down there, couldn't you?"

"Yes, Aunt Eileen, thank you very much."

Polite, Mrs. Sheridan thought distastefully when the door had closed softly. Oh God, polite! And clever as an owl. It makes the situation more difficult.

Difficult was how the funeral struck her, too. She knew very few people there, and conceded it wise of them not to come over in the churchyard and sympathise. During the too-long service conducted over the open grave in a sleety rain, Celia's mother's friends stood together in silence, shabby, vaguely disreputable, gloveless hands in their pockets, the men mostly in black berets, the women wearing duffle coats and hoods or bright woven scarves. They looked, thought Mrs. Sheridan, unwashed, and if one were unwise enough to go too near them they would almost certainly have dandruff and grubby collars. A few of them lifted their hands in quiet salute to Celia when the priest had coughed his way to the end of the service and the gravediggers had done their work. Then they shuffled off, hands again deep in their pockets, through the rain.

One of them, however, a bearded young man with dark friendly eyes, came boldly over to Celia, who stood, with no tears visible,

between her aunt and uncle, staring down at the new grave. He bent and kissed Celia's forehead, and silently pressed her hand in its neatly mended wool glove. She said softly, "Goodbye, Michael," as he turned to go, and he smiled back at her. That was when Celia cried, not loudly, but desolately with her head bent so that the tears flowed down on her school gabardine. Mrs. Sheridan clicked with annoyance and murmured, "Some people seem to have no *intelligence*, upsetting a child like that," as her husband lifted Celia in his arms. That was how they left the churchyard, Celia being carried as if she were a much younger child, and not caring.

That evening found Mrs. Sheridan wandering around the drawing-room picking things up and leaving them down again, still seeing the tenderness in her husband's face as he lifted Celia off the wet ground by his sister's grave. She bent and poked the fire, stirring the live coals idly before she realised what she was doing. She seldom poked fires, and frequently reproached Kate for doing so. She had no sooner dropped down in a deep armchair than she was up again, this time to cross the hall to where her husband's small retreat was. She entered without knocking.

"Well, Eileen?" The voice was tired, a little exasperated, and so was the face: a fleshy, chinless face, still young, but lined with discontent. The eyes, however, were patient and strikingly blue, and the brows above them were golden like the thinning hair.

"I—I want to talk to you, Denis." This was a bad beginning, and the husband knew it.

"Couldn't it wait until the morning, dear? I'm dog-tired and I want to look through this stuff they've sent down from the office. Not having been there all day—"

"In the morning I mightn't feel like talking to you, and I feel now I should."

"Very well, dear." The pen was laid down, the elbows set on the desk, and the blue patient eyes turned attentively on his wife. "Go ahead, then."

Mrs. Sheridan sat on the arm of a leather-covered chair and fiddled with the wristband of her watch. It had minute blue enamelled medals from Lourdes dangling from it like charms. "I wonder if we're wise taking that child, Denis."

"Wise?"

"I mean, she's been brought up very differently from Susan and Desmond—if you can say she's been brought up at all. Although she's older, she spends a great deal of time with them, and I'm more than a bit worried how it may affect the children."

She stopped, waiting for the interjection which would give her the impetus to go on. But it did not come. The patient blue eyes looked with unchanged attentiveness into hers, although the eyebrows were raised a fraction. She fiddled again with the medals.

"I mean, it's not that I don't *like* the child. She seems a good little thing, but the point is that she's bound to be totally different from Susan and Desmond because they've been so sheltered—just normally sheltered, I mean. Celia's been traipsing around abroad and picking up God knows what notions and listening all her life to God knows what conversations between her mother and that queer set she belonged to (did you just *see* them today!) and suppose Celia wants to keep up her acquaintance with some of them? And apart from anything else, can we really *afford* to keep the child? I mean, even as it is it's only by careful management I contrive to keep inside the house-keeping budget and it stands to reason—" Mrs. Sheridan became suddenly aware that she was bungling the interview even before the interruption came.

When it did, it was no more than a fleshy upraised hand and a flicker of genuine anger in the eyes. "Don't confuse totally different issues, Eileen, if you please. If what you're asking is an increase in the housekeeping allowance, you may have it—whatever sum you consider will cover Celia's keep, starting next month. If that's not the purpose of this enquiry, then I beg you keep to the point."

The undeclared, for the most part silent, marital warfare between them seemed to have reached another minor crisis, and the wife subsided into fretfulness. "If only you wouldn't forever sit on the bench, Denis. I don't deny some extra money will be useful, almost essential—I'll let you know later how much—but that isn't really why I came to you, and what's more, you know it isn't. It's just that I'm worried, and you might try to understand. You can't deny, I suppose, that your sister was—well, one doesn't want to be offensive—"

Again there was a flicker of anger in the blue patient eyes and, for

the first time, a smile, almost of relish. "No, indeed."

"Please, Denis, don't be exasperating. For seven years, ever since we were married, I've put out whatever friendly overtures you considered necessary, to a woman the rest of your family had ostracised. As you very well know, nobody else ever invited her. But whenever Susan and Desmond had a birthday party, Celia always had to be included, and her mother had to deliver and collect her. I didn't object, and it wasn't my fault if latterly Celia didn't come. But inviting her for an afternoon is one thing, and offering to rear her with one's own family is another. It was only today at the funeral I fully realised it. And if you don't see what I mean—"

"*Listen* to me!" In another man it might have been considered a shout, but Sheridan's voice was too well controlled for that. The unusually hot anger behind it managed to convey itself, nevertheless, to his wife, and she sat doubtfully up on her chair, half regretting her visit. "It's time anyhow that you knew something about my sister—now that she's dead. What do you know, really, apart from what my mother whispered to you over the teacups? You know that her child was illegitimate, that she didn't join Mamma for bridge on Sunday nights in Sandycove, that she frequently had dirt under her fingernails, and didn't go to Mass, and drove a smelly old motorbike that roared all over the city, that she had a few lovers, and dabbled in painting and sculpture. And you were witty once about the old blue jeans she wore when she came on her motorbike to collect Celia at one of your birthday parties."

"Please don't be sarcastic, Denis."

"What you don't know is that she was in many ways an extraordinary woman in the real sense of the word. Not as a painter or a sculptor, mind you. In that respect she was terrible and, what's more, she knew it. An hour before she died at the hospital she asked me to sell as much of her stuff as I could for Celia. She said it might keep the child in oranges for a month. And she laughed her head off when she said it. It reminded me of the way she used to laugh years ago, at home, over her own efforts at dancing or tennis."

As Sheridan spoke on, the anger left his voice and his eyes, and the big tense bulk of him seemed to unwind at the desk. "She was a big ungainly youngster, you know, too tall and too broad and too rude

and too strong and too untidy to be any good at tennis-club dances. I don't believe she ever had a date. I don't believe she ever cared either. At twenty-one she got a small legacy and went off without anybody's leave to Italy, and she was away the best part of two years. When she came back she was untidier and taller than ever, and she went to live in a basement flat in Leeson Street, and because there was so little light there she used to work out in the basement area even in winter, with the passers-by gazing down at her, and little boys sometimes raining down orange peels on her. She didn't care. She was twenty-five when Celia was born, and when the ordinary district nurse arrived at the bidding of somebody else in the house, she found that the baby was not only born, but bathed and dressed and in its basket. My sister was happily sitting up in bed, drinking whiskey. And she *wasn't* much of a drinker, mind you. I believe the district nurse kept the story as the *pièce de résistance* in her repertoire for nervous women in childbirth."

"Do you mean to say she was alone, absolutely *alone*, when the child came and that she got up out of bed to bath and dress it?"

"Knowing my sister, I dare say she had the foresight to leave water and clothes to hand. However, I know only the facts as they were related to me by the nurse, mind you, *not* by my sister. I don't know the details." He paused, deliberately smiling at the woman large-eyed before him. He knew what she was thinking. He knew that she saw childbirth only in terms of an expensive cosy nursing-home where they didn't spare the dope, and had the christening cake carefully packed away in its tissues until the appointed day, and brought in the telegrams and flowers arriving hourly.

"She had to leave Leeson Street after that because the landlord wouldn't have a child in the place. It would have been easy to dump Celia on some woman in County Dublin or further away for a reasonable sum. And apart from the charitable institutions, there are schools, you know. Discreet places, often run by nuns, who for large sums will take over the child completely and not send it back for holidays. My mother, I remember, suggested such a school and offered to pay. If my sister had agreed she could have come home again. But she laughed at the idea. She found a flat—the one Kate collected Celia from this week—where a child, and an irregular one at that, was not objected to, and they settled down. It would have been easy for her to wear a

wedding-ring. But she didn't. She didn't call herself Mrs. anything. She made no effort to explain Celia at all. But she took her everywhere with her. As soon as the child could sit up it travelled on the back of her motorbike, as you know—everywhere. And every summer, of course, they went abroad."

"How could she *afford* it?" Mrs. Sheridan's voice was still fretful. "Did you ever give her money?"

Sheridan was briefly saddened by the flash of spite in his wife's eyes, almost as if he were seeing it for the first time. "Occasionally—yes. My sister never asked for money and she never refused it. She always claimed that all she had to find was two fares to France and back. She knew the cheapest way to live wherever she went, and she always said it cost her more to live in Dublin. She had a very small allowance from my mother—three pounds a week—and evidently got used to living on a shoestring."

"What," Mrs. Sheridan asked triumphantly, "what about Celia's father—this Michael, I presume? Didn't he sometimes give her money?"

"Nothing whatever. He hadn't even the ability to provide adequately for his legal family—five sons, I believe. But you're wrong in presuming it was Michael, you know. Celia's father is a seedy school-master of a literary turn of mind, a semi-alcoholic, who thinks himself the devil of a wicked fellow to have fathered Celia. A pathetic wreck. Periodically his wife would throw him out in the small hours if she caught him sneaking in, and then he'd go back to my sister and sleep on the studio couch. Right up to her death he used to go there, I believe."

"But what about Celia? What on earth was she told?"

"I really have no idea. Possibly that he was her father. Possibly nothing at all."

"Well, I think that her proper place now, Denis, is with him, *not* with our normally-reared children. Legally he could be forced to support her."

"If paternity could be proved. But let me tell you straight away, my dear, you are wasting your time." He smiled with the careless gentleness of the determined. "Celia stays here. Although, mind you, my sister made me promise nothing whatever about Celia. She didn't

even suggest I might take her—possibly because she knew no suggestion was necessary. To rear Celia is my pleasure as well as my plain duty." He shredded a piece of blotting paper before going on.

"You see, I too, like the rest of my phoney family, was ashamed of my sister. I went only rarely to see her, and once when she came into the office to say hello in her old blue jeans and man's socks and jacket greasy from the motorcycle, I let her see that I was ashamed. She showed no resentment whatever, and never came again. I knew today in that freezing churchyard that I would never cease despising myself for that. In her whole life I don't believe my sister was ever ashamed of anything. She was proud as a peacock of Celia—and why on earth shouldn't she be?"

He paused, not finished with all he wanted to say, but Mrs. Sheridan broke in. She might have lost this round, but she could still cut her losses. "You were saying something about an extra allowance, Denis."

"Oh yes, an extra allowance, certainly." Sheridan's well-controlled voice betrayed only the smallest glimmer of irony, but his blue attentive eyes were full of it, and the odd golden eyebrows above them were lifted. Mrs. Sheridan, silent and baffled, understood almost as little of this stranger she had married as she understood of Celia, asleep in the warm bedroom, or of Celia's mother in the cold ground.

Incense

LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL

The summer as it passes owes to night
The pattern and the progress of its flight,
The flowers which succeed each other turning
As slow as constellations and as sure,
Like those great swinging censers deeply burning,
Dispensing time in sweet sequential shower:
Time the inflammable, the fragrant burden
Of star and flower, in the sky and garden.
The summer is a night, so swiftly slow
Does the one tempo of the movement flow.

The Cow and the Fiddle

GURO BJORNSON

OLD DRIKA's nimble feet carried her plump body over the country road, stirring the spring dust into surprised whirlwinds. She was on her way to Hans's Bjorn, whose farm lay like a gentle sleeping giant still holding in his open hand the little piece of clearing where lived Drika and Haakon.

The three children of Hans's Bjorn and his wife Ingeborg saw her coming. They knew by the swish and whirl of Drika's skirts that she was not coming to borrow a cup of sugar. They ran to meet her and Ingvar, the oldest of the three children, called out, "Why do you walk fast, Drika? Did Haakon fall in the well?"

Then Andreas, the youngest, asked, "Did Haakon fall asleep on his fiddle?"

But Greta, who felt more than she thought, asked, "Is Sun Cow stuck in the marshland between the bogs?"

At the mention of Sun Cow, Drika's tears began to flow. Her tears were as heavy as the last drops of rain water from the spout over her log cabin in the wood. But what Drika had to say was not meant just for children's ears. Such news must be felt by all.

It was not until she reached the kitchen steps and saw the children's mother that she told the tragic news: "The time has come. *He has sold Sun Cow.*" After these words she sobbed aloud. Then she came into the kitchen and seated herself near the window that overlooked the road. Her apron was no longer an apron, but a large red and white checked handkerchief with a cross-stitch at the bottom, tied at her waist for convenience.

"*He has sold Sun Cow. He has sold Sun Cow.*" She could not believe her own words. She swayed and rocked her body from side to side—"He will bring her up the wood road. She knows that she is leaving our humble home for all time." Her tones were those of the Lutheran minister when he spoke from the pulpit on Sunday at Spring Prairie of the world's end.

The children stood speechless. Drika without Sun Cow and Sun Cow without Drika! Sun Cow bidding farewell to Drika—touching her plump hands with her lips and gazing at her merry eyes, now dim with sadness. They knew only Sun Cow's innocent greeting, the shine of her in the sun. She glistened like grandmother's brown watered silk! They could see the curry comb resting on an old stump, always handy, so that when Drika had a minute to spare, she would use the comb on the cow. Is it any wonder she was called Sun Cow? They also liked the crunch crunch when she chewed the rock-candy, and the thud thud of her cream turning to butter.

Now, Drika stood up and leaned against the window-sill. The children sensed that there had been some change for the worse. They crowded to the window and there down the road came Haakon leading Sun Cow. Neither the spindle legged man nor the dejected cow looked to the right or the left.

Sun Cow with a halter about her neck! It could not be! All you had to do with Sun Cow was to hold out your hand with a little sugar in it and talk to her and she would follow you anywhere. "Come now, Sun Cow. We will go to meet the children. We will go up the road and look for wild clover. Come under the crabapple tree, where the milk stool is, and Haakon will play for you."

It reminded the children of the day, the black hearse with the black tassels, the men in black—drawn by black horses that were taking away the body of old Peter's Erick. That day they had been glad to stay at the window and not venture out to shout questions at the passers-by. They had been spellbound until the hearse reached Gamel Akken's place and looked no larger than a big black dog in the road.

But Andreas could not stay long under such a spell. "Look! Look! Haakon has his fiddle with him. Is he going to sell his fiddle, Drika?"

She sobbed as out of the past. "He would not part with it. He brought it from the Old World. He has his fiddle but what have I left in this sorrowful world?"

The children understood. They had heard Haakon play with his ear close to the fiddle, as though it was talking to him, telling him what he wanted to hear. He would close his eyes to help keep the story to himself.

The children never knew if Drika listened to the story the fiddle told, but they had heard her sigh, seen her look away over the hills, and her shiny knitting needles would rest a bit in the midst of mittens made of white yarn with gay flowers. Then she would sigh and work faster than ever.

Haakon and Sun Cow were nearing. The children dashed out of the gate. They ran into the road and stretched their hands across his path.

"Stop! Haakon! Where are you going? Drika is crying—you can't sell the Sun Cow."

When they stood in front of Haakon it was Ingvar who could tell Haakon had had a nip of the gooseberry tonic that Drika made for him and that stood in the little dugout under the log cabin in a brown jug with a big cork in it. Ingvar knew that this made Haakon play his fiddle, even if the world were falling apart, and the fiddle would sing its song with its heartstring tingling against the slender bow. If you listened carefully you forgot everything and so did the fiddler. Maybe Haakon would forget about selling the cow.

"Play the fiddle, Haakon! Play the fiddle, Haakon!" And he did stop, and to their surprise, put the fiddle under his chin and closed his eyes.

It was Andreas who first fell under the spell of the lively music. If he but had his corn-stalk fiddle with him, he would play too, but he only had his arm and fingers and his feet! He leaned his head to the side and held the imaginary fiddle, his fingers moved in time, his eyes closed like Haakon's, but now and then he peeked out to see if there was anything he should see and his foot went tap-tap-tap.

Then Greta swung in rhythm and lifted her apron, and her braids bounded on her back and Ingvar called out, with abandon, "Swing your partners, dos-a-dos, allemande left, all join hands, forward and back, swing the lady behind you." And there they were like little Nissen forgetting all else. They made merry and were joyful as long as Haakon, with his fiddle, was telling the story of his boyhood happiness in the land of fjords, hills, valleys and singing waters. The fiddler and the fiddle were as if one heart beat in them and the song was the voice of their happier yesterdays.

But Haakon could not go on forever so, and he came to the part where the boat sailed away from his beloved Norway carrying him with it, and his heart was left behind to mourn his going—but the fiddle came with him to keep alive the memory of his youth.

The fiddle now sang of the melancholy years in the new land, his frail body, the struggle with life and now this new sadness. The fiddle shed his tears for him.

Andreas tried a solemn face and moved his arms and fingers in slow time, but finally opened his eyes and looked up at Haakon. The fiddle sang the plaintive wail of the screech owl, in the trees at night, the hopeless sorrow and tender devotion of the mourning dove, the moaning winds and falling leaves of autumn, dripping water off the roof into the rain barrel. Sounds of the corn shredder in fall, the windmill's cry in a storm, the slow music of the pipe organ in the Spring Prairie Church, that, like a magnet, turned all heads to see the pallbearers coming quietly up the carpeted aisle, their neighbors wearing sad masks to cover their everyday faces.

Greta no longer danced. Ingvar's gay and reckless calling of the square dance had floated away on the wings of Haakon's gayer tune and Andreas stood aged in a predicament where he was unable to see for the time a cheerful ending to it all.

Sun Cow's head was low. She had bid Drika farewell, and now all that remained was for her to wait and obey.

But Haakon did not put his fiddle under his arm, nor stop playing. If he did, he would have to say something, or do something, so he started the procession again and Sun Cow walked after him and the children followed.

Drika came to the gate and called out: "There she goes. There she goes." And then a sob. "She is gone! She is gone —."

Little Andreas took hold of the cow's tail and tried to hold her back. "Stay! Stay! Sun Cow!"

And Greta, sensing it was too late, began to cry. "Goodbye, Sun Cow. Goodbye —."

Ingvar walked at the side of Haakon and tried to reason with him. "Why do you sell Sun Cow? Can't we buy her like we do her calves?"

But the fiddle had told the story and it was as sad a story as had

ever fallen from its strings.

A hopelessness crept into their hearts.

Just then mother jingled a small bell that hung over the stoop and the children knew it meant "Come home." Ingvar stopped talking, Andreas dropped the cow's tail, and Greta, no longer able to sob out, "Goodbye," turned her back on Sun Cow.

When this forlorn trio reached their house, the sounds of Drika's sobbing and Greta's hiccupping mingled together, and mother said, "Greta, go and lie down on the couch. And where is your handkerchief? I have told you before not to use your apron."

"But Drika—does—" sob, hiccup—sob.

"Hush," said mother.

Drika sat in the grandfather's chair, with her head bowed.

"Andreas," said mother, "get the cup and saucer Drika gave you for your birthday and here is some jellyroll. Set it in the window-sill, for her."

Drika said, "I shall not ever eat again."

But Andreas broke a piece off the jellyroll and put it in her mouth. And mother filled the cup with hot coffee.

"Drika likes her coffee in the saucer," said Andreas, "but this is too small," and then Drika took hold of the small red and gold cup that was shaped like a kettle with three legs, and held it with both hands and in one draught she emptied it, and mother refilled it. "Be so kind—," and Andreas broke off another piece of jellyroll, his own lips moving as Drika chewed. She repeated, "I shall not ever eat again," and then she looked up the road and listened. She began to talk to Sun Cow as she always had, as if the cow were a telephone and Drika could hear the answer, but the children could not. "*Sol Ku*, (Sun Cow) you always liked to have the children come to see you. You knew that they wouldn't let Hunden bark at you. When you heard them playing on the road you lifted your head and waited."

"She came to meet us."

"You know they brought you a lump of sugar in their pockets." Drika shook her bowed head. She sighed as only a peasant can sigh—a sigh that comes down through the ages. "You will miss the sugar and the children."

"We took sugar lumps out of the Sunday sugar bowl," confessed Andreas.

"You loved your calves, but you knew we did not have room in the clearing."

This Andreas and Ingvar understood. The clearing was just a picture out of a Norwegian story book. Then, too, Drika took up a lot of room, she was as round as the oak stove, and even if Haakon was as thin as the poker, he had to have room for his rocking chair.

"Drika, Sun Cow taught her calves the way a cat teaches her kittens. She didn't *moo* once when you sold her calves to us. She told them, 'If Drika or Haakon ever need a pail of milk, come back to the hollow—'" said Ingvar.

"Tonight, I will walk home over the road where you and I have so often walked together—the door of the cow-shed is open and waiting for you. But you are gone. You are gone."

"I think Sun Cow will run away from the people who bought her, and she will come right back to your door." Andreas was trying to believe every word that he spoke.

Drika shook her head again and moved her knees in rhythm. "He will come alone. *Ja*, he will come alone. We can live without a cow, but we must have a place to rest our heads."

"You can come and live here. We will make a place for your head. Then you can keep Sun Cow."

"Andreas," said mother in passing, "do not talk so much."

"He will come alone. The money will be in his pocket—. Tomorrow we must go to the town hall to pay the taxes."

"He will bring the fiddle back," said Ingvar.

"*Ja*, the fiddle, he wouldn't sell the fiddle—. Who will play for you now, Sun Cow? There will be no one in the clearing to listen—you are gone."

Andreas put the last of the jellyroll into her mouth and mother filled and refilled the little red cup with black coffee and for the last cup a sugar lump to hold between her lips. Drika's apron was slowly drying.

"*Takk lille Andreas. Min appetitt er gone for alltid.*" (My appetite is gone for all time.)

* * *

Ingvar could not rest. Something must be done. He went across lots and sat on the wood fence where he could look into the hollow. He would work out a plan.

But what he saw made him gasp—"Mother!" and then he remembered he was alone. He sat and stared. A look of unbelief on his face. "*Gud!*" he imitated Lars, the hired man, but more prayerfully.

Ingvar strained his eyes; was he sure that he was seeing right? Slowly an expression of understanding and relief came over his countenance. He wanted to run home as fast as his legs would take him. No, not today. Everyone was too busy. He could not tell Greta and Andreas. They were like a sieve, everything went through them. He would talk with mother. But he knew when not to get in her way. He knew there were several hours before twilight and their bedtime and when Haakon would return walking slowly, touching his pants-pocket to feel if the snuff-scented and stained old leather pouch was there, swelled and stretched with silver.

Ingvar walked to calm himself but his face was flushed and his eyes shone, he must not lose the secret. When he reached the house, "Mother," he implored, "let me help you with supper." And as he walked in and out of the pantry, kitchen and dining-room, carrying things, he saw Greta asleep on the couch. A pleasant look of childhood had come back to her face as though in dreamland she had learned a secret. Andreas was nodding in a small chair at Drika's feet. Drika's head was bowed.

Later when the supper table was set mother spoke. "You have been of good help to me this hour, Ingvar. While the biscuits are browning we can sit here for a bit in the shade of the willow tree before—."

It was as though all had been ordered and Ingvar stood up and put his lips to mother's ear. He talked fast with one eye toward the kitchen door, where, at any moment, one of the sleepers would be astir.

"What is this you say?"

Ingvar's voice grew more excited and pleading. "Mother, the young heifer was there, right under the crabapple tree. I saw her. Mother, she belongs in the hollow. I have often seen the heifer talking with Sun Cow. They had their heads together visiting over the rail fence that Haakon put up when he bought the land from father.

Mother, cows know everything like the *troll*. They do not want to leave Drika alone in this sorrowful world. Haakon has his fiddle but what has—?”

“Will this day ever end?” And mother wiped her forehead with her apron. “Now, don’t let your wits run away with you.” Then she paused and sat thinking. “Ingvar, you are the oldest. I will tell you something. Do you remember that last year Drika and Haakon tried to sell their copper boiler? The year before the old, old sword? And so it has been year after year. Always we have come out of our door to help them over the threshold. Now, do you want us to give back the heifer?”

“Ja! Ja!”

The mother looked at her son before she answered. “Let me think. I shall talk with your father. Say nothing to the young ones.”

Ingvar was pleased at this distinction. “No, they can’t keep—.”

Mother sighed and got up and went back to the kitchen, but Ingvar jumped up and down, and began to practice his whistling that he had neglected all day. As far as he was concerned, everything was settled.

Ingvar was the first to finish his supper. He followed mother back and forth, helping to carry the clean crocks and pails to the milk house. She said, “I have talked with your father —.”

“What did he say? Hurry!”

“You will first have to be quiet and you will have to promise to go at once to bed. We can not have another *spetakkel* (hubbub) here today—will you do as I say?”

“But mother, we have to go to the clearing—we have to make sure—we have to write *et brev* (a letter) to tell them —.”

“Very well, then,” said mother, “take the children outside and tell them. You have time to go there and back before it gets dark but when you come home go directly to say *god natt* to Drika and then upstairs —.”

“Ja, takk (Thank you). Say takk to father.”

The three children stood out under the mulberry tree and Ingvar explained that what he had to say could only be said if the “young ones” understood about what mother had said, about the day never

ending. "There cannot be another *spetakkel* here. Cross your hearts—."

This the children did, gladly, in fear that they might burst if he didn't hurry, and Ingvar blow up with his own importance. Then he pushed their heads together and brought his face close to theirs. "I saw her under the crabapple tree, honest. Mother believes me. She says —." But they did not question him. The story was only half told when their hands came together in a circle and they whirled around the tree. But Ingvar stopped all of this. "We must get started before Haakon gets back. We must take with us —."

"Hunden?" Greta asked.

"*Nei*. He might scare her. I have here a pencil and a *tablett* to write *et brev* to tell everything. Drika's cowbell hangs on crabapple tree so we don't have to take a bell along. Andreas, you carry the rope and Greta —."

"Let me take the May basket I made. I shall put flowers in it and we can put the *brev* in it when you have written it." Greta ran to get the basket.

The brothers waited at the kitchen door with forced innocence. "Mother, we are going for a bit of a walk. Keep Hunden at home and tell Drika to stay until we get back." Ingvar gave his imagination a final stretch. "We need to take a walk, we ate too much supper." And Greta was back, hiding her May basket behind her. "We want to see the sunset from the hill."

"Poof!" answered mother and shooed them along with her apron—and then added, "Remember what I have told you. Do not stay too long, and wash up outside tonight, under the willow tree, and then go —."

But the children were gone and looked even from their backs as though one more spark and they would go up in smoke.

Greta's hiccupping and sobbing were forgotten—Andreas' optimism was proof—. It was as he thought, the worst is not as bad as one thinks, and Ingvar, who had to calm his wits at all times, was in his glory, leading the children. Mother knew as she looked at them, that joy and sorrow are the same, only at different ends of the stick.

Never had they hurried so fast down the wood road. The nodding blossoms along the way were rudely awakened and found themselves, roots and all, sitting in a pink and blue braided paper basket. It was

only when they neared the foliage gate—a gate of wild grape, bitter-sweet and hops—that the children stopped to get their breath.

"We mustn't scare her—she doesn't expect us—she wants to surprise Drika and Haakon too." They pushed aside the foliage and walked in, and in the manner that they always greeted Sun Cow, they spoke: "It is only the children—Hunden is at home—Don't bark, Pasop."

They walked slowly toward the crabapple tree.

"Lie still, Bossie. It is good she has gone to bed already."

"The cow-bell hangs in the tree—get it down," whispered Greta.

"First we must put the rope around her neck and tie her to the tree. We can't let her get away now. Andreas, take one end of the rope and wind it around the tree." Ingvar held the other end and made a loop and quickly slipped it over the cow's head.

Greta took the cow-bell down and buckled it around her neck. Ingvar untied the rope and fastened it to the strap that held the bell.

"She wants to stay. She wouldn't need to be tied." Andreas was stroking her sides.

"But now they will know she is going to stay for all time."

Greta picked up her May basket and carried it to the door of the log cabin and hung it on the door latch. Pasop, Haakon's dog, barked once. "He would bark twice if we opened the door and three times if we went in." They all began to laugh. Their excitement was bubbling over.

Then they seated themselves in a huddle on the low stoop. Ingvar got out his big carpenter's pencil. He put it first behind his ear while he brought out the tablet stuck under the bib of his overalls.

"We should have brought the Norwegian *ABC Bok* along. How can they read English?" It took Greta to remind them.

"Haakon can read English. He read the Sunday papers about Happy Hooligan. Do you remember when he read, 'Meet me at the duck,' when it should have been, 'Meet me at the dock'?" The boys struck their thighs. Greta threw her head back. They laughed and laughed. After all, the fire under the pot did not need more faggots.

"I won't use big words." But so far, only Ingvar's tongue was black from wetting the pencil, that was as far as he got.

"Hurry, Ingvar. It is getting dark. See the shadows, how long

they are on the ground."

"I hear sounds in the woods," Andreas listened.

Pasop barked and ran off, but came back. Ingvar took the pencil out of his mouth. "It's only the wind and twigs falling off the trees and some frogs croaking and a hoot owl and —."

"A whip-poor-will! A crazy nighthawk just flew over the clearing—hear it cry!"

"Mother is looking for us," whispered Andreas.

They listened and the young ones moved closer to Ingvar. "Don't—I have to have room to write with this big pencil, don't I?" But he did not push them away. "Come here, Pasop. You know we can always go in the house and lock the door. Pasop knows who we are."

Then Hunden ran into the clearing and they greeted him gleefully. "Hunden! Hunden! It was you we heard. The cow is tied, come in. Did mother send you?" But Hunden ran back into the wood road.

"Hunden, come back! Come back!" Instead the foliage gate parted and two lonely and forlorn people stepped into the clearing. They stopped and stood looking. Both the dogs leaped into the air, barked and wagged a friendly welcome.

"Drika! Haakon!" The children jumped up. The cow arose and walked forward as far as her rope would let her.

"*Spøkelse?*" (ghosts) asked Drika, staring at the cow in the shadow of the crabapple tree.

"*Nei*, she is real. She is not a ghost. She is yours. She has your bell on her neck. She is tied to your tree. You can pick potato bugs for father and pay us back."

Drika went to the cow and put her arms around her. "*Sol Ku's datter* (Sun Cow's daughter) come back home —?"

"She looks just like Sun Cow only she is newer. That is why you thought it was a *spøkelse*. You can keep her; mother says we will take her calf when it comes because you haven't room in the hollow."

"We have often seen Sun Cow and her *datter* talking together over the fence. Sun Cow told her what to do—so if Sun Cow had to leave, *datter* should come all by herself—Drika, and stay here under the tree and wait for you." Ingvar's words tumbled out.

Drika was wiping her eyes, but the children could see no tears.

"The Good Lord took Sun Cow, but now I have you."

"I thought it was Haakon who took her away, so you could go to the town hall." Greta tried to get this clear.

Andreas burst forth, "And she knows about Haakon and the fiddle. She remembers when she lived here when she was a little calf. He can play for her when her calf comes and you are milking her—."

"It is well that Haakon did not sell his fiddle that belonged to his father's father. The fiddle had no *datter*. It would bring us bad luck."

Haakon's dejected look was gone. He sat down in the chair near the rain barrel, his fiddle across his lap. He began to put resin on the bow.

But the children knew that they should be going and Norwegian partings must be done in correct form.

Ingvar shook hands. "Do you like the heifer, Drika? What will you call her?"

Drika looked at the heifer. "*Sol Ku's Datter* if you will be as good a cow as your mother —!"

Then Andreas stepped up. "Drika, you have a place for your head now, and a cow, too —."

It was Greta's turn to shake hands. "Thank you for this day. We will bring milk to you until the calf comes."

Drika stroked the cow's head. "The children will bring you sugar lumps. I will take good care of you, and when the calf comes, and when the blackberries are ripe, I will take you and the calf with me and you can graze while I pick berries for the children's mother."

And now Haakon, who not long ago had looked as though he would never play his fiddle again, began to swing his bow across the strings and a merrier tune the children had never heard.

Editorial Notes

(continued from inside front cover)

erous response is far more than a reassuring gesture of good will. We are sure it reflects the contemporary writer's profound concern over the too few outlets for good writing and good reading in the modern magazine world.

In addition to the requested material, several hundred unsolicited manuscripts have been received since the first announcement of *The Literary Review* last January. Many of these manuscripts were not acceptable for literary reasons, but the point of importance lies in the large number that were worthy but had to be returned simply for lack of space.

This flood of serious material illustrates the urgent need to provide more and better literary magazines that pay their contributors and pay them adequately. We know from experience that such magazines must be subsidized—by colleges and universities, foundations, associations, private donors. And why not? Opera, symphony orchestras, chamber music, ballet, much of the best theatre, virtually all scholarship and research are subsidized—why not creative writing, which from time immemorial has been the richest and most significant expression of the human spirit.

The Literary Review hopes to help meet this cultural need in American and indeed in international life, both by its own work and by its encouragement of the founding

of other such magazines. Its sponsorship by Fairleigh Dickinson University, an institution less than sixteen years old, attests the University's belief that universities bear as great a responsibility to creative effort as to scholarship and research.

The members of the Editorial Board of *The Literary Review* are all members of the faculty of Fairleigh Dickinson University. Dr. Clarence R. Decker and Professor Charles Angoff are the Editors. Dr. Decker, founder and Editor (1935-1953) of *The University of Kansas City Review* during his presidency of that University and author or co-author of four books, is the Academic Vice-President of Fairleigh Dickinson University. Professor Angoff, Managing Editor of the original *American Mercury* under H. L. Mencken and later its Editor, is the author, editor or co-editor of twenty-two books, including the recently published *H. L. Mencken: A Portrait from Memory*.

Others on the Editorial Board are Dr. Peter Sammartino, founder and President of Fairleigh Dickinson University and author or editor of several books, who inspired the founding of *The Literary Review* and assured it of the University's support; Loyd Haberly, poet, designer, craftsman in the printing and binding of books, and author of a number of books; and Edith Heal, author of some thirty juveniles and two novels.

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